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THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE

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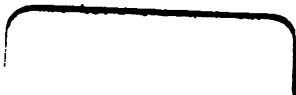
SHAKESPEARE COLLECTION

—
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(Class of 1889)

OF NEW YORK





**The Collected Writings
of DENTON J. SNIDER**

**BIOGRAPHY
OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

*The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.*

Hamlet.

*So they loved, as love in twain
Had the essence but in one;
Two distincts, division none:
Number there in love was slain.
Hearts remote yet not assunder;
Distance and no space was seen.—*

The Phoenix and the Turtle

*It tells the very purpose of my task
To make you see the soul's artificer
In the artificer's own soul inscribed.
His many works are just one work at last,
Three dozen plays a single play,
Of which his Life is the right argument.
The poet is himself his poem true
His deepest song his own Biography.*

The Shakespearian.

o

A BIOGRAPHY
OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SET FORTH AS HIS LIFE DRAMA

BY
DENTON J. SNIDER



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St. Louis

To my Wife

Shakespeare's Life-Drama

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Shakespeare's Life Drama

INTRODUCTION.

One of the most familiar passages in all Shakespeare, memorized by every declaiming schoolboy, and kept ever fresh by quotation in the mind of the adult, is the following:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts—

What gives to these lines such enduring vitality is not simply the fact stated, which is trite enough, but the biographic touch, which throbs through them and makes them quiver with a kind of personal avowal. Thus the poet hints his general world-view, undoubtedly derived from his particular calling, since he was an actor as well as a writer. That is, he conceives here, under the mask

of the melancholy Jaques, human life as a whole to be a drama, and hence his own life in its wholeness to be rightly a Life-drama, whose acts and scenes he as a man has been and still is playing.

In like manner we hear the moody Antonio (in *Merchant of Venice*) utter his brooding sigh:

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano—
A stage where every man must play his part,
And mine a sad one.

To a tragic intensity deepens the guilty self-accusing Macbeth after his deeds of blood:

Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.

In a goodly number of similar comparisons strown throughout his works Shakespeare has emphasized the connection between his vocation and human life in general. Evidently he deems his dramatic productivity as the supreme expression of his own career. His life in its entirety is his best drama, better and greater than any single drama, yea than all of them put together. Hence his biography, if we follow his view of himself, must be treated as a drama in conception and movement, though not necessarily in the dramatic form of dialogue. He is his own "one man" who "in his time plays many parts"—not only many acts and scenes, but many dramas, thirty-

six of them (some say more), which nevertheless make at last one drama of life, which we, following his authority, shall call Shakespeare's Life-drama.

Not the poet's career, then, as a bead-roll of separate events told off in chronological sequence; nor do we here propose to pile together, one by one, Shakespeare's single plays into an aggregate more or less jointless; another idea and method are the present aim. Not Shakespeare's disconnected dramas, but the one grand Shakespearian Pan-drama: such we may designate our theme; not Shakespeare's thousandfold characters, but his one all-embracing world-character which is just his colossal personality; can we catch it, and make it illumine and irradiate the vast confusing multiplicity which hides it, till we may not only see it, but formulate it in words for human apprehension? Let the confession be made that some hope of the sort has dictated the forthcoming book, and constitutes its best right to be written.

Such is, in general, the scope of what we here call Shakespeare's Life-drama. For a larger, loftier drama than any or all his dramas is his life evolving in and through them, and creating them as its own highest self-expression and fulfilment. Though the ultimate form of his genius is for us the dramatic, we shall often find him chafing against its confining bounds, especially in the latter part of his career, when he, feeling if not looking backwards, instinctively throbbed with

his life's total deed, and more than once threatened to break over his Art's restraining conditions.

It is now more than half a century since a distinguished, disgusted commentator on a play of Shakespeare (Professor Craik) whose edition we pored over in our boyhood, lit up his rather dry page with a smart flash of splenetic humor: "After all the commentatorship and criticism of which the works of Shakespeare have been the subject, they still remain to be studied in their totality with a special reference to himself." Such was the Professor's growl, which had a lurking tendency to turn back upon himself, for just he was one of those sinning commentators. But he goes on with his polite grumble: "The man Shakespeare as read in his works—Shakespeare as there revealed not only in his genius and intellectual power, but in his character, disposition, temper . . . is a book yet to be written." So spake longingly, even if rather vaguely, the somewhat soured but very worthy exegete, and his damnatory judgment largely holds good today in spite of the deluge of print pouring over and about Shakespeare since it was uttered.

Nevertheless we chronicle our belief that the aspiration to know Shakespeare in his entirety and as an entirety has been emphatically on the increase in recent years. The bolder-hearted student no longer rests content with the beautiful passages, with the unique characters, or even with the isolated dramas; he must grasp the total work and

with it the total man creating it in the very process of creation. He has come to feel that he cannot know truly the part without knowing the whole, that any part of Shakespeare is such by sharing in and helping to constitute the whole Shakespeare. In other words, the supreme object to be attained is the man himself, the very personality of the sovereign poet.

What is this personality? Something hard to define, since it is itself just the ultimate definer of all things, including itself. But we may conceive the dramas, poems, characters of Shakespeare as effulgences or emanations from one central creative sun; these his works are converging lines or radiant light-paths leading back to the primal source, which is his personality. Along these rays of light streaming from the middle luminary we are to travel back through vision to the man himself at the heart of all his labors, which have radiated from himself. There is at bottom but one character in all the plays of Shakespeare, and that is his own, himself, or his Self. If we can catch that and commune with it and appropriate it, we have attained a chief, yea the one greatest blessing of Shakespearian study. Thus from the external manifestations of the Genius we penetrate to his inner creative essence, to his personality.

Such an outlook we may here take in advance, recollecting, however, that it must be dim, vague, undefined at the beginning, since the course of the entire book is to illumine just this personality and

to bring it into clearer definition. A biography of a Great Man has hardly won its worth unless it introduces us into his soul's own process as revealed not merely in his life's chronicled events, but also in the genetic unfolding of his works.

Having thus declared the prime article of our biographic faith, we must next get ready to face its denier, who upholds the view that Shakespeare himself lies completely hidden, unknown and unknowable, within and behind all his characters. It is the sad lot of us poor mortals that we never can get really acquainted with his elusive self-secreting personality. Although the highest authority calls upon us to know even God, and openly promises us that beatitude, still we can never know William Shakespeare the man, the human soul, as he is in himself. That this forthcoming book of ours refuses to accept any such skeptical view of Shakespeare (and of God too, for that matter), and will proceed to build itself upon the opposite plan, may here, by way of preface and perchance of warning, be stoutly affirmed.

It is, however, but fair to the reader to tell him that very eminent Shakespearians there are, who with equal positiveness maintain the unknowability of the man Shakespeare. That is, the Shakespearian self in its distinctive individuality is so completely veiled under its dramatic mask that its workings and its inner evolution cannot be unriddled. We shall cite first the most distinguished upholder of this opinion, Dr. H. H.

Furness, editor of that monumental work, the New Variorum Shakespeare, who prints in the preface to his edition of *As You Like It*, as follows: "I confess to absolute scepticism in reference to the belief that in these dramas Shakespeare's self can be discovered (except on the broadest lines), or that either his outer or inner life is to any discoverable degree reflected in his plays: it is because Shakespeare is not there that the characters are so perfect. The smallest dash of the author's self would mar to that extent the truth of the character, and make of it a mask." So thinks the learned Doctor, who especially denounces "the error to infer from his (Shakespeare's) tragedies that his life was certainly sad, or that because his life was sad we have his tragedies." Thus Furness denies the validity of the very generally accepted tragic Period of the poet's life. Moreover it should be set down for our right appreciation that he, our greatest American Editor, seems to fathom the ultimate underlying motive of the grand Shakespearian achievement in this astounding wise: "I believe that Shakespeare wrote his plays to fill the theater and make money for his fellow-actors and for himself." Certainly so, but is that all the answer there is to his life's greatness? Still, as for me, I am fain to believe that Furness treats himself with scant justice in the foregoing manifestation of his mentality; he shows himself here at his worst, for he has now and then bad spells in spite of his prevailing good-sense and good-humor.

A second eminent Shakespearian who is disinclined to see Shakespeare in Shakespeare, is the Englishman Sir Sidney Lee, who has written a large Life of the poet, very useful for its collection of materials and for its far-probing historic research. The book deserves its popular vogue on account of its excellent presentation of Shakespeare's body, even if it leaves out and often denies his soul. The negation of Sir Sidney is turned most fiercely and long-windedly against the Sonnets, whose autobiographic value he belittles quite to zero. His reading overwhelms us by its Oceanic extent, hardly by its depth; very valuable becomes often his widely gathered information, especially on the Sonnets, if we draw from his facts not his conclusions, but just the opposite.

Such is the re-actionary view concerning Shakespeare's biography held by two of the time's foremost expositors of the poet. Of course the present book will insist upon its right and duty to run counter to such high authority, which in this case fails, as we think, to penetrate to the essential fact not only of Shakespeare's work, but of all Literature, namely the personality of the man creating it, and therein revealing his creative self at its highest.

Every biographical account of Shakespeare accepts these three main divisions of his external career: his youth at Stratford where he was born, educated, and married; then his active manhood in London, where his dramatic and literary work was

done; finally his return and retirement to his home at Stratford, where he passed a quiet but by no means idle time till his decease. That is, Shakespeare's Life-drama, regarded as embracing all his days, falls of itself into three separate compartments, which external division has its internal correspondence in his spirit's evolution. Accordingly, if we model our exposition of his career after the prime historic facts of it, we shall have to consider it under the following heads:

- (1) The youth Shakespeare at Stratford;
- (2) The man Shakespeare at London;
- (3) Shakespeare's Return to Stratford.

These three divisions, while local on the outside and thus external, show also the organism of his life's deeds and events, as well as the sweep of his soul's history. Shakespeare was not a very old man in years when he died, still he had practically completed his work, he had fulfilled the round of his career. It is quite generally agreed that he added no drama or poem to the Shakespearian canon, as it has come down to us, during the last four years of his life. But that he was intellectually stagnant we cannot believe. At least he was looking backward, and could hardly be rid of much deep and searching reminiscence.

The most casual glance cannot help observing that here is a round or cycle of places which starts with Stratford, moves to and through London, and

returns to Stratford. In this outer spatial circuit is included at the same time the rounded sweep of his life in its three ordinary stages—the youth Shakespeare, the middle-aged Shakespeare, the old-getting Shakespeare. Corresponding to these physical stages of the man are his psychical ones, which together show his completed human fulfilment.

Was the poet aware of this movement of himself, especially of its inner phase? If we watch him closely, we shall often catch him periodizing the world, including in his sweep events, man, and necessarily himself. Revolution is one of his terms for this thought, which his thinker Hamlet utters on viewing the skulls of the grave-yard: "Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see it." The pleasure-loving Antony sees the round of himself in his own deepest trait:

The present pleasure,
By revolution lowering, does become
The opposite of itself.

More than once the poet reflects upon the tragic recoil of the deed, "whose bloody instructions return to plague the inventor." Also in his comedies he fails not to give a humorous tinge to the comic revolution: "Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges," as the clown sums up the action in *Twelfth Night*. The inspired Maid of Orleans declares in prophetic rapture: "With Henry's death the English circle ends." And Edmund, Satan's representative, in *King Lear*, pronounces

the pivotal thought and word in a dying vision of truth:

Thou hast spoken right, 'tis true;
The wheel has come full circle—I am here.

Meditating on the round in Nature and Mind we often find him in the Sonnets, which undoubtedly reveal his most intimate self-communings. Thus he glimpses his life's epochs (Sonnet 60):

Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift con-
found.

Here plays a gleam of his three phases of life: Nativity crawling toward maturity, which is then crowned with his brightest works (we may suppose) whose glory, however, is darkened by "crooked eclipses" till lowering Time finally rescinds his supreme endowment. So the poet visions his life's stages quite as he has passed through them, in outset, in sequence, and in significance. Especially circling Time he shows to be a favorite theme of his contemplation; through all his works, but more particularly through his Sonnets, runs a unique philosophy of Time and signalizes the deep thinker-poet.

Here we must not fail to take notice of Shakespeare's defiant attitude toward Time, whose insidious power of change and destruction he challenges forthright (No. 123):

No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do
 change,
 Thy pyramids built up with newer might
 To me are nothing novel, nothing strange—

He proclaims himself the same Shakespeare, the same personality (or *I am*) in all his works, being more primordial and enduring than the Pyramids. And now we are to hear his mighty oath in defiance of all the lying appearances and negations of Time (Sonnet 123) :

Thy registers and thee I both defy,
 Not wondering at the present nor the past;
 For thy records and what we see, do lie,
 Made more or less by thy continual haste.
 This do I vow, and this shall ever be,
 I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.

So he trumpets his dare at the arch Deceiver and Destroyer, the old hoary Time-devil, father of all illusion and decadence, whereupon he takes his vow of fealty to the true and eternal principle of his genius. And it would seem proper that his biographer ought to repeat the same vow on starting to reproduce in writ the poet's record of achievement.

Picking up the three fore-mentioned divisions of Shakespeare's life, which seem sharply marked off in locality as if for the reader's first pointer, we may set them down here in advance of their fuller exposition, as the three leading parts of the Poet's entire Life-drama :

- I. Prologue at Stratford.
- II. Pan-drama at London.
- III. Epilogue at Stratford.

It may be here prefaced that the middle years of Shakespeare's activity, embracing his supremely creative time at London, will receive our pen's fullest detail and emphasis in the forthcoming biographic venture. But we shall also spend more than usual attention upon the poet's Life-prologue at Stratford, unfolding as completely as possible the very formative and no means scant education of the youth Shakespeare, since that portion of his career has hitherto been quite insufficiently conceived and handled, as we judge the matter. The third part above scheduled, namely the poet's return to Stratford, which takes place in his advancing age, but not all at once, is to receive due notice along the course of the narrative, but cannot be specially expanded in this book.

Prologue.

The Stratford Youth.

1564-1585.

So to this Life-drama must here be premised a Life-prologue, that is, a prologue which has been lived and achieved in the deed, and which is now to be set down in writ, being a kind of foreshow, and even prophecy of the poet's approaching London Pan-drama, if we dare unify his work thus to a word. Prologue is a term often employed by Shakespeare, both literally and metaphorically, to designate "the harbinger preceding still the fates" of his play, and so named the "Prologue to the omen (event) coming on"—which term I find recorded more than a score of times in his theatrical dictionary.

Some twenty-one years, according to our estimate, make up the duration of this living Prologue of Shakespeare, which has its own special evolution

from the man's birth till his majority. In order to understand the forthcoming greatness of the dramatist, we must construe or rather visualize his youthful career at Stratford. We have to raise to light and put into order the material there won for his colossal superstructure at London. Everywhere in his dramas we find both the lore and the experience which he could have gleaned only in his small rural birth-town, where is to be found the communal germ of his entire later developed institutional world, or of the grand Shakespearian city in which all his characters live and move about with clash or concord.

A basic and pervasive human experience, then, our future man-builder acquires in these prologuing years at Stratford. And here we may interject for our cognizant reader the reflection that Shakespeare had a supreme genius for experience, not simply for the getting of it, but for the using of it after it was gotten. What he saw, felt, and suffered came to mean more and deeper in his case than in that of any other self-recording mortal, if his be the supreme writ, as is often stated. Other minds have wrought and endured profoundly and mightily, but somehow this existence of ours with its joys and sorrows has left its trail upon his soul so significantly and so creatively that his self-expression in the word is often declared the highest yet uttered by man. And has not the recent world-war with its Anglo-Saxon primacy given us a new commentary on Shakespeare? For somehow we

turn to him more than ever as our greatest representative, who is still to "show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

At present, however, we are to watch him as a youth and catch him, when we can, gathering those personal experiences which hereafter he is to forge into characters who marvelously begin to speak and act on the spot in their own right. What he as an individual did and suffered, became at his creative touch another individual doing and suffering, not as a mortal like himself, but now overmade to an immortal and a dweller in the eternal city once called daringly Shakespearopolis. Then he was endowed also with the transcendent power of uttering himself at the top of human speech, which likewise has the magic gift of never dying. Accordingly at Stratford we shall try to sleuth him getting those elementary and often crude experiences, both outer and inner, which he is hereafter to transfigure into the poetry of his Life-drama.

William Shakespeare the Great (for there were seemingly dozens of other little William Shakespeares scattered through Warwickshire and the neighboring shires of England) was born April 23rd, 1564, which date of his nativity is not exactly verifiable, but has been generally accepted, in a spirit of universal compromise on a shadowy point. The parish register records that he was baptized April 26th, 1564, a rite which usually, but by no means always, took place three days after birth. The Latinized entry for that day still runs read-

able: *Gulielmus, filius Joannis Shakspere*. And another little slip in old Time's calculation should not be wholly forgotten by our celebrants of Shakespeare's birth-day. The Gregorian calendar was not adopted in England till 1752, according to which we would have to add ten days to bring the 23rd of April 1564 (Old Style) to its right date. Hence Shakespeare's birth really, according to the Sun's faultless chronometer, must have happened on the 3rd of May 1564.

The parents of this William Shakespeare bore the names of John Shakespeare, and Mary Arden (Shakespeare), both of whom came of families having a distinctive character and genealogy, which will also have to be looked into. Their home was Stratford on the Avon, a rather diminutive town of Warwickshire in the West of England, once on the Welsh frontier and still not so very far from it—a significant fact in our poet's Life-drama. Perhaps, too, he had a drop of Welsh blood in his own veins, despite his robust Anglo-Saxonism. Here he lived till he was twenty-one years old—a time of multiform preparation and presage, hence we caption it a Prologue, overturning his future career. Or we may deem it the implicit, the potential, the germinal stage of the man's total fulfilment.

This Stratford in the middle of the sixteenth century is reported a prosperous market-town, with a number of small local industries and with its own civic life and character, having its prom-

inent parish church and guild-hall, and also high-school. Evidently a town with its own distinctive psychology. But the statement must be added that it possessed little or no power of growth; two centuries later it contained about the same number of inhabitants as in Shakespeare's time, hovering around 2000, with fluctuations of fortune up and down. In the year 1590, when our poet was living in London, the officials of Stratford complained that their town had fallen much into decay from the loss of trade. Probably this was one reason why Shakespeare left it as soon as he became of age, having stored up much life-stuff for his coming Pan-drama.

In fact such a community had a very important part in the youthful training of the poet. It may well be deemed one of the representative civic atoms of which all England is composed, being that primal institutional home of hers, in whose bosom her greatest man was born and reared. Its influence can be seen streaming through all his works, imparting to them its local color as well as its social character, along with traits of its people. And once he seems to pick it up almost bodily and put it into one of his plays, though he there calls it Windsor in a kind of comic disguise. The fact is that Shakespeare communed with and got to know the soul of England through atomic Stratford better than through massive London, which, however, is to be the scene of his manhood's self-realization.

Another fact which this book is going to emphasize about Stratford is, that it had long been a border settlement of Anglo-Saxondom in the latter's advance against the Celts of Wales and Western Britain. Some such position the town had once occupied for hundreds of years, and the memory thereof was still alive and at work in the poet's youth. Thus he drank of the spirit of that strong persistent drive of the Anglo-Saxon to the westward, which in his time was just beginning to push out to America, and which had already settled Jamestown in Virginia, and which has since his day rolled across the whole Western Continent from Ocean to Ocean. Many towns in the Mississippi Valley have a frontier history which is not dissimilar to that of Stratford, though not so aged, and which still lies back in their memory and forms a unique strand of their character. Thus they may well find in Shakespeare a phase of their own vivid experience, which has not yet become altogether obliterated even in England. The very name of the poet's family has in it a memento of border warfare, if we with alert eyes glance back into its history.

I.

THE SHAKESPEARES.

May we not catch already a note of defiance, if not a downright challenge to combat, in this caption which designates seemingly a brood or clan of

spear-shakers, who reach back with their peculiar weapon long before musket and gun powder? At any rate some such conception must have been in the mind of Edmund Spenser, famous Elizabethan cotemporary, who, wishing to compliment his singing comrade on what he probably knew would tickle family pride, selected just this war-tuned name for his praise, and hailed the poet

Whose Muse full of high thought's invention
Doth like himself, heroically sound—

which allusion, though nameless, is supposed to be applicable only to Shakespeare.

Nor should we fail to recall ancient Homer who glorifies with a like epithet his Achaean heroes before Troy, as they on the bloody bridge of war would brandish their lances against the foe. And Hesiod, Aeschylus, and others sing their literal Greek Shakespeare (dorussoos) not as poet, however, but as fore-fighter with spear in hand. Well does the English antiquarian Camden say that people often derive their names from what they wear and work in. Hence probably the enormous vogue of our English name Smith. So we read that in ancient English documents are found such appellatives as Longsword, Broadspeare, and even Pope Breakspeare (Nicholas) of historic fame, as well as Henry Shakelance and Hugh Shakeshaft. So we may listen for a moment to these "heroical sounds" echoing over and about our poet's patronymic.

The name Shakespeare, usually deemed good Saxon by derivation, is said to be found even in Kent, perhaps not so very far from where the savage Hengst, the first Teuton invader of Britain, landed and began his march toward the West, which by the way is still going on. It seems to occur sporadically throughout England, till Warwickshire, which faces the old Welsh borderland, is reached, where the Shakespeares abound exceedingly, most of them without any known kinship to one another. They appear to shoot up copiously and quite spontaneously along that advancing Saxon line, which must have been at first largely composed of valorous spear-shakers. So we may revive here at the start the war-like suggestion which the name of Shakespeare called up in the minds of his cotemporaries. Beside Spenser already cited, Ben Jonson has celebrated Shakespeare's well-filed poetic lines

In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance—

wherein the name again furnishes the threatening image of combat.

Next the question arises: At whom was shaken this multitudinous array of spears appallingly reaching far backward in time, as well as now strung along the western English boundary? Only one answer possible: against the Celt, specially of the Welsh frontier. And while we are dallying over etymologies we may take the time to add that

the very word *Welsh* is still a German-Saxon term signifying a foreigner, one not of our stock or race, and was doubtless flavored originally with a spice of soldierly contempt. In fact the Teuton of to-day who knows nothing of Cambrian Wales, still uses the same word (*Wälsch*) for non-German neighboring peoples, such as the Italian, the Slav, even the Frenchman. And their to him strange speech he will scorn as a kind of Welsh (*Kauderwälsch*). On the other hand an indignant Celt (*Mackay*) has taken his etymological revenge by turning the name Shakespeare into Celtic, deriving it from two words meaning Longshanks, possible eponym for a good runner, perchance fleeing from his Celtic foes.

It has always seemed rather wonderful to us that English writers should claim that their great poet was born in the heart of England, with the inference that on this account he knows all about the English heart, whereof springs his characteristic genius. But the map and especially history show that Stratford on the Avon lies not so very far from the dividing line between Wales and England, ancient racial foes, and not yet fully reconciled, if we may judge by the recent Welsh patriotic Renaissance. Stratford was still somewhat of a border town in Shakespeare's time, and he reveals in numerous passages of his dramas traces of the old race feeling which he must have caught and brought from his home-town and its surroundings. In fact, Stratford itself, we are

told, had a considerable Welsh population, and many of mixed blood, since along that border the two peoples had been commingling for long centuries. Some have spied a Celtic blood corpuscle in Shakespeare himself, trickling into his heart and even into his imagination from some remote ancestor, possibly already from his grandmother. Generally the barbarous invader would slay or drive off the native man, and marry the native woman—a process which had been for generations going on around Stratford.

There is no doubt, however, that Shakespeare sided in sympathy with the Saxons, one of whom he deemed himself, as we may infer from the number of portraits he has painted of Welshmen, mostly with a dash of grotesque if not contemptuous humor. See for instance Sir Hugh Evans in *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Fluellen in *Henry V.* But for a type of the warlike spirit along that borderland, we may take the poet's description of the furious duel between English Mortimer and Welsh Glendower on the shore of the Severn, which river was long regarded as a kind of dividing line between Celt and Saxon, and flowed not so very far away from Stratford. But just behold our Mortimer, now the Saxon hero:

On gentle Severn's sedgy bank
In single opposition, hand to hand,
He did confound the best part of an hour
In changing hardiment with great Glendower.

Three times they breathed, and three
times did they drink
Upon agreement of swift Severn's flood
Blood-stained with these valiant com-
batants.

Here we may well feel the Shakespearian throb of the old conflict not far from the poet's fire-side, where he must have often heard the story told with an epic fervor, which he here reproduces (in *First Henry IV*). But, on the other hand, the typical fact must not be neglected that just this fighting English Mortimer, his people's hero, marries his desperate Welsh foe's daughter, though she cannot talk her husband's language to do the courtship. In fact this drama (*The First Henry IV*) overflows with the warlike enthusiasm of the struggle on the English and Welsh frontier, being the poet's own neighborhood laden with all the vivid memories of his youth. One reason why the *Second Henry IV* droops in its thrill is that the scene moves North away from Shakespeare's juvenile range around Stratford.

So much meaning we have to attach to our poet's name derived from the advancing spear-shakers along the border—Saxons labeling themselves after their chief business. Says Sir Sidney Lee, good for statistics, whatever we may think of his esthetics, as he epitomizes the foregoing facts: "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the surname (Shakespeare) is found far more fre-

quently in Warwickshire than anywhere else . . . And among them all William was a common Christian name."

Another indication that Shakespeare took a pronounced public pride in his spear-shaking ancestry, is the fact that the draft of the coat-of-arms for his father (which he applied for in 1596) contains as its most distinctive mark "a spear gold steeled," doubtless emblematic of his name and family. Moreover in said draft it is declared as a ground for such honor that the applicant's ancestors "were for their valiant and faithful service advanced and rewarded by the most prudent prince King Henry the Seventh." This attempt to obtain heraldic glory cost the poet a good deal of time and trouble, whereof the account can be found in the antiquarians by any reader who wants such details. Here we would merely note that our Spear-shaker employs the weapon of his name as the blazon of his title to the rank of a gentleman.

And while the etymological fit is on, we may as well give to it a little more vent by saying that this common cognomen *William* has also a warlike strain in its origin, being ancient Teutonic *Willehelm*, whose two constituent words are *will* and *helmet*, both of which have never lapsed in modern English or in modern German. Thus we may feel from afar the original fondness of those old Saxon spear-shaking borderers for naming their boys *William*, that is, will-helmeted, or pluck-protected. So the live reader of William Shakespeare may feel

a bright streak of satisfaction in tracing the genealogy even of the poet's name, hinting as it does his prime elemental energy poured forth not now in war but in writ, and after its way heroizing him as the Will-helmeted Spear-shaker. No little of this original ancestral strength and clash he mightily exploits in his dramas, specially in his tragedies.

That Shakespeare was attached to his name and fondled it poetically may be seen in several of his word-teasing sonnets (135-136) in which he caresses his abbreviation *Will*, and dances it very willfully up and down through a number of meanings. Indeed he puns with it a kind of sportive hide-and-seek, which often leaves the reader uncertainly groping through a labyrinthine word-play between the proper name *Will* and the common noun *will*, as for instance in the overture

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*
 And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in overplus:
Wilt thou whose *will* is large and spacious
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my *will* in thine?

Strangely he celebrates his Dark Lady as having a greater *Will* than his own, as "being rich in *Will*" to which he is the submissive thrall. And his final supplication (136) turns on his dear name:

Make but my name thy love, and love that still
 And then thou lov'st me, for my name is *Will*.

Nor should we forget to remark that these fore-mentioned numerous William Shakespeares in and around Stratford and its borderland were sometimes mistaken one for the other, thus producing confusion in business and in intercourse through similarity of names. In fact such instances of confusion are of record. Hence it is not unlikely that our young Stratford, William Shakespeare in his own person, may have experienced more than one case of mistaken identity somewhat similar to that of the two Antipholuses or of the two Dromios in *Comedy of Errors*, often supposed to be his first play. So this comedy, deemed improbable by Coleridge, can well have been directly transcribed, at least in part, from the youth's daily book of life.

Shakespeare repeatedly pokes his good-natured jibes at the Welshman who is talking English; thus the dramatist we overhear portraying scenes taken from the streets of Stratford or from its school, which once had a Welsh master. But by way of reparation, perhaps unconscious, he makes Welsh Owen Glendower a poet, and a Shakespearian poet at that, though with a decided Welsh mythical streak mingled with ridiculous superstitions. Perhaps we here may catch Shakespeare reproducing in Glendower the weird Celtic imagination, whose strains the youth must have heard often at Stratford, in contrast with English Hotspur, who is also a poet in speech and conception, though he denies it and scoffs at such a talent. But Glen-

dower takes as much pride in his poetic as in his martial prowess:

I framed to the harp
Many an English ditty lovely well,
And gave the tongue a helpful ornament—
A virtue that was never seen in you.

So Shakespeare sets up a little Welsh-English eisteddfod or tournament of fantasy between the two imaginative warriors, the Welshman and the Englishman, as if preluding the tug of battle.

Still Shakespeare was careful not to carry his fun too far there in London, since suspicious Queen Elizabeth was herself of Welsh blood. Then, too, her dynasty bore a Welsh name, being derived from Owen Tudor, husband or lover (for the relation seems somewhat doubtful) of Queen Catherine, widow of Henry V, our poet's chief historical hero among English Kings, who also declares in the play named after him: "I am Welsh, good countryman." Elizabeth would naturally not want too much said about the origin of her House or of herself. Less than a century before the birth of Shakespeare, Henry VII ends the wars of the Roses by his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field (1485), and enthrones the House of Tudor, which lasts till the death of Queen Elizabeth (1603). At this time, however, the poet had transcended the period of his writing English Histories, and was voicing his tumultuous heart out of its tragic depths. Moreover, during

the present Tudor era, the border feud was more quiescent, and Wales could glorify itself peacefully over England, to which it now furnished the sovereign.

In these more tranquil years intercourse between the two peoples would improve, and we can imagine the young inquisitive Shakespeare leaving his native valley for a trip over the border, crossing the Severn and the Wye, scene of many former spear-shakings like that between Mortimer and Glendower. Thence he would penetrate the lonely Welsh mountains where he might behold the scenery of *Cymbeline* and inspect the cave of Belarius. Why should he not proceed to Milford Haven, then the chief seaport of Wales, with its various historic associations? For it is our belief that he needs and seeks, first of all for his creativity, the sense-basis of the thing immediately seen and experienced, which he then transmutes into poetry.

Here we are led to ruminate the wondering question: Did the youth Shakespeare in his neighborhood rambles ever visit Caerleon on the Usk, the famous Welsh home of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table? This brings up one striking omission or silence in Shakespeare's works, so striking that it must mean intentional avoidance if not downright repugnance. He could not help often hearing, during his boyhood along the border, about the Arthurian legend, the most creative and the most lasting product of the Welsh, possibly of the whole Celtic mind. But not one of his acknowl-

edged plays or poems is devoted to any hero of the Round Table, whose tale is supposed to have been located in Welsh Caerleon, a short journey from Stratford. Shakespeare, so deeply imbued with the world's mythical spirit in its Anglo-Saxon and Greco-Roman manifestations, seems to shun the Celtic Mythus, which spread over England, and indeed over Europe, taking lodgment in far-off Teutonic and Mediterranean lands, and reproducing itself in many forms of poetry with little interruption down time, for it is famously alive to-day in English Tennyson and in German Wagner, as it was already long ago in Italian Dante, not to speak of old Gottfried von Strassburg. Only a few brief allusions—some of these contemptuous and others suspected—does the greatest British poet suffer himself to utter in reference to the greatest, most productive British legend.

This fact has long since seemed to us very significant. Shakespeare, lover of folk-lore and one of its supreme poetizers, turns away from the grandest manifestation of it just in his own neighborhood, where its glory once rose in full splendor, and its famous feats of war and love were certainly familiar to him from childhood. How can this be accounted for? In our judgment we have here an indication of that deep-seated racial antipathy which necessarily grew up along the fighting borderland between Welshman and Englishman, or more generally stated, between Celt and Saxon. Do we not see it still to-day furiously at work in Ire-

land, with echoes across the Ocean through all America? So the new spear-shaker Shakespeare shakes his intellectual spear at the old Celtic fortress over the Severn, where was fabled the Table Round. And when the bristling forays are no longer permitted, he fires his sneer at "the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies." Or take that unique consolation of the tavern's hostess over the passing of Falstaff: "Nay, sure, he's not in Hell; he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom." I fancy that young Shakespeare first heard this expression in a border pothouse, whose Welsh barmaid naturally substituted the Cymric hero Arthur for the Hebrew Father Abraham (Henry V, 113).

The Spear-shakers, or the Shakespeares, when the long border conflict had grown flaccid, lapsed into peaceful plebeian tillers of the soil, tradesmen, and artisans. John Shakespeare, the poet's father, was born at Snitterfield (very Teutonic word still), a village some miles north of Stratford, where he was a farmer; but about 1551 he moved to Stratford, then a thriving market-town where he engaged in business with success at first, but after some years a slow adversity overtook him and ground him finally to very dust of poverty. From this descent into indigence he seems never to have recovered, though he rose to be in title an English gentleman blazoned with a coat-of-arms, through his illustrious son.

But John Shakespeare's supreme deed, done at

the height of his prosperity in 1557, was his winning the heart and hand of Mary Arden, daughter of a well-to-do land-owner of Wilmcote, three miles from Stratford, to whom his father was a tenant. This woman was her husband's superior in station and wealth, and doubtless also in native talent, good-breeding, and education. Thus dawns upon history this new Mary, mother of William Shakespeare, the most important personality in his early training, and without question the right parent of his genius.

II.

THE ARDENS.

After a general way it may be affirmed that the Ardens were the more aristocratic of blood and breeding, while the Shakespeares were the more plebeian. In the name of Arden there lurks a suggestion of Norman French origin, since it brings to mind the region of Ardennes in France and also in French Belgium. Then there was the actual Forest of Arden, a woody tract of Warwickshire which extended to the Avon, and lay not far from Stratford. But best known is the idyllic, quite utopian Forest of Arden, with its bright heroine Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Let us note, however, that John Shakespeare, son of an humble farmer, won the hand of his overlord's daughter, Mary Arden, who had been reared in comfort for that time, if not in luxury. She doubtless had

some education, at least that of the better class of young women of her social rank. Existing documents show that she made her mark instead of signing her name; but that need not imply that she was unable to write her signature, so antiquarians tell us. People who well knew how to subscribe their autograph, often simply put their mark on legal instruments. John Shakespeare, the father, a business man and keeper of accounts, is doubtless an example of the same fact. He could write, though we meet with his letterless sign.

Moreover, Mary Arden brought to her husband considerable property. At her father's death in 1556, and hence a year before her marriage, she fell heir to a handsome sum of ready money and a good piece of land with farm-house called Asbies. Besides this portion she had previously acquired an interest in two homesteads with adjoining acres at Snitterfield. Thus she lifted her husband to the rank of an English landowner. It would seem that she, the youngest of seven daughters, was the favorite of her father, who probably had not permitted her to grow up unlettered, as he made her one of his executors. Surely rustic John Shakespeare was in luck when he won to marriage well-dowered Mary Arden, who must have felt love to wed the man beneath her in wealth, blood, social position, and doubtless in education, not to speak of talent. On the whole a rather unconventional un-English act it was, which the poet Shakespeare has often repeated in his plays. This disparity be-

tween his two parents the keen-witted boy must have noticed long before he quit home. In fact it became more and more deeply stamped upon his mind, and therewith doubtless upon his feelings, as he marked his father's continual subsidence and his mother's devotion and steadfastness. Will this impressive home-felt experience in regard to the man and the woman nearest to his head and heart, show itself hereafter when the poet constructs his gallery of human characters made up of the two sexes? We shall often notice that what he has personally experienced is the chief original content which he pours into his acquired poetic forms, dramatic or lyric.

Accordingly it may be here foresaid that the son William Shakespeare, in a number of his portraits has made his women-lovers the heroines of the romance, while his men-lovers are rather an inferior set. Compare Portia with her Bassanio, Rosalind with her Orlando, Helena with her Bertram, even Juliet with her Romeo. To the woman he gives the will, aye the will to love, and to take the consequences. I believe that the youth Shakespeare saw the counterpart of this distinction between the woman and the man in his own home for many years; the woman was the better man of the two, and especially the stronger in love. Besides, John Shakespeare not long after his marriage began to droop in business, and for years he continued to be a sinking man, till he lost not only his own but his wife's property, which she apparently surren-

dered to stem his downward fortune. The boy must have seen and felt this decline of his father during his entire growth to manhood. Hence it lay in him to stamp upon many a play that the woman has more character than the man, that the female is made of better stuff than the male. Such was his daily experience in his own household.

Pointedly the thought emerges from the circumstances that Mary Arden Shakespeare was the parent of her son's genius, and not only that but also she was the one who fostered its aspiration, supported its schooling, and helped it to its opportunities. She had six sisters, and they also would have their influence on the bright boy, when he would visit their homes. Manifestly the aristocratic family of the Ardens with its traditions, with its long genealogy, with its prides and prejudices, which he failed not to hear from these six aunts, especially from the two unmarried ones, was dominant in the boyhood of the poet, while the some what plebeian Shakespeares would tend to fall into the background. For the old maid, as we may still hear her call herself in honor, banquets festively from the genealogical table. More than likely the Arden women had always deemed sister Mary's marriage as a mesalliance. Thus environed and trained, the original Shakespeare of the people gets for life an aristocratic tinge, often traceable in his work, and sometimes made a subject of democratic reproach to his book.

Another note must be penned in this connection.

Robert Arden, father of Mary, shows by the wording of his will drawn in November 1556 that he, if not a Catholic, was at least Catholicising. A different branch of the Arden family furnished its martyr to Elizabethan persecution of the old faith in 1583. From these and other facts the question has been mooted whether Shakespeare's mother was secretly a Catholic, and perchance her son as well. She seems to have adjusted herself to the church of her husband in her marriage, and probably kept shy of breaking with the established religion, which was Henry the Eighth's Protestantism. Shakespeare doubtless felt somewhat of these religious counter currents in his family, and became careful and tolerant toward both sides, so his home-life probably showed a compromise of silence on the great church-dispute of the age, which grew to be his mind's habit. Then his nature was not that of a reformer or religious martyr, though he in his way partook of the deepest spiritual movement of his time, and felt as his own its collision, as we may note in his *Hamlet*. He could, however, have hardly been a convinced Catholic, if his characters expressed his honest conviction as regards the Papacy in *King John*, and as regards monasticism in *Measure for Measure*. Consider also the drift of his evident familiarity with the Genevan Protestant version of the Bible. Shakespeare's religion has been much discussed in these recent years, and he has been claimed to be both a Romanist and a Puritan, as well as the Colossus

straddling both the religious extremes of his time. But an extremist he never was and could not be, except in poetry; hostile to neither side, yet sharing in both, he lived the whole and then portrayed it wholly.

The poet's most distinctive monument to his mother is the character of Volumnia in his *Coriolanus*, the aristocratic woman with her class prejudice and strong will, and especially proud of her illustrious son who has achieved such lofty eminence. This play was written about the time of her death in 1608, perhaps not long afterward, under the spur of affectionate retrospect. It is doubtful if he ever paid any such tribute in his works to his father, who died in 1603. Shakespeare has limned quite a list of mothers through his dramas, both good and bad, in a variety of shadings. Unforgettable is the passionate motherhood of Constance in *King John*, yet subtly commingled with her own political ambition; on the other hand Hermione, though also a queen, is wholly mother and wife. Wicked maternity may be graded from Hamlet's mother down through Cloten's to Sycorax, "the damned witch" whose offspring was Caliban. But the poet, has excluded the mother from his most terrible tragedies, *King Lear*, and *Othello*, in which the daughters have the stress, though these are wives also. The tragic mother, Lady Macbeth, can fling under foot her motherhood for ambition's sake, and demonically exclaim

Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering
ministers—

. . . . I have given suck and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that
milks me;

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless
gums,

And dashed its brains out—

to win a sovereignty other than the maternal. Cleopatra, also a tragic mother, who yields up motherhood to passion, says at the last pinch of fate

My resolution's fixed and I have nothing
Of woman in me—

and hence nothing of the mother. Still, as she takes the venomous asp to her bosom, caressingly she fondles it in memory of her blessedest moment:

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
That sucks the nurse to sleep?

So she approaches death with a flash of maternal instinct breaking up from her deeper heart. But her final word turns back to her Roman lover, her greatest conquest: "O Antony—What should I stay"—whereupon she passes beyond.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare's mother transferred to her own family the refinement, the

good-breeding and the culture of the Ardens. Through all the ups and downs of her husband, she doubtless kept her home-life intact for her children. Can we construe some traits of the son from what the mother must have imparted to him in his youth? First, as already noted, he unquestionably derived from her the aristocratic bent which we find in his works. The family tree of the Ardens could not help flowering in that household. She probably inducted him first into the child's storyland, for the woman is the natural depository of the fairy-tale, ballad, popular song, and folklore generally, which are ever recurrent in Shakespeare's plays. Whence else did he first catch this bit of floating legend:

O that it could be proved
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,
And called mine Percy and his Plantagenet!

The stories and the expressions of Scripture, with which he shows such familiarity, he probably heard first at his mother's knee. If the *Volumnia* of *Coriolanus* pictures her influence, Shakespeare was spiritually much more of an Arden than of a Shakespeare. We have to think him altogether more deeply mothered in his home-life than fathered, and the boy could not help feeling it thoroughly. The coat of arms which the poet obtained for his father John Shakespeare belonged by mind's birthright to his mother Mary, whose

family had also a coat of arms which the son sought official permission "to impale" on that of his father, though seemingly an obstacle arose.

The whole situation recalls that of Goethe, doubtless the greatest literary genius since Shakespeare. How often have we during this narrative had to hum the lines in which the Weimar poet sings of his parentage with his soul's sweetest music:

Vom Vater hab' Ich die Statur,
Des Leben's ernstes Führen;
Vom Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
Die Lust zu fabulieren.

These two traits, especially the latter, "the delight in fabling", the Little Mother (Mütterchen) in both cases imparted to her like-minded son, who voiced it eternally in Literature. Each mother had the happiness of living to see her heart's own boy the greatest man of his age. But it must not be forgotten that each of these youths served up to his fond mother a domestic escapade which must have made her wince at the molt of young genius, and which has become world-famous in the lives of both poets.

It is our opinion that the boy in a scene of *Titus Andronicus* (Act IV. sc. 1.) reproduces certain domestic experiences of Shakespeare during his school-days. This was an early drama of the poet, some say his earliest, and his home-life plays through it (horrible as it otherwise is) in various ways. An aunt also is introduced into it who loves

“me as dear as e’er my mother did,” and she has also been a domestic teacher who

hath read to thee
Sweet poetry and Tully’s orator.

Nor is the mother herself left out, for when the question is asked of the boy, what book is that which he is reading? he replies,

’Tis Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*—
My mother gave it me.

This work of the Roman poet is known to have been Shakespeare’s most congenial and most influential school-book, since its poetic and mythical power over him can be traced not only in his earlier but also in his later productions, even till his last drama, *The Tempest*, whose lines beginning “Ye elves of hills” (V. 1.) are an Ovidian echo from Golding’s translation of the *Metamorphoses*.

But just now we may well be moved to take another brief glance at the significant maternal memento which bespeaks the timely present to the promising school-boy, whose words still breathe his affection for the giver: “My mother gave it me.” And what is more surprising, that very copy of Ovid may still exist with Shakespeare’s signature on the title. But where and when did he learn his Latin?

III.

SHAKESPEARE THE SCHOOL-BOY.

It was one of the epochal days of his life when the little laddie Willie Shakespeare, aged seven, stepped across the threshold of the Stratford Grammar School, in which he was destined to remain under instruction some six or possibly seven years (1571 till 1577-8). At this source he was to tap the fountain of the age's culture; how much did he drink? Some say, very little; others affirm that here he won the solid and lasting elements of all that classical lore with which his works from beginning to end are saturated. Indeed it would seem that the Baconian theory, which insists upon the learning of the author Shakespeare and the ignorance of the man (or actor) Shakespeare, must find its germinal starting-point in what the lad did acquire or could acquire in the Stratford Grammar School.

Given the aspiring boy, with an unquestioned talent for assimilating quickly everything, with an incentive fostered at home especially by his mother, he being then at the most apperceptive and remembering time of life—what could he get, and what was his opportunity? We have before us his book called the Works of William Shakespeare, wherein the careful scrutinizer, especially the open-eyed practical educator, with the aid of the few outside facts, can construe fairly well the chief

cultural winnings of the youthful poet during his school-years, from seven till thirteen or fourteen.

Let us foresay, however, that this Stratford Institute had long been in existence, but had recently been remodeled and adjusted to the spirit of the age. The Renaissance or the New Learning, as it was often Anglicised, had penetrated to the small town on the Avon, as well as to numerous other communities of England, and for that matter, of Europe. It was a time of spiritual uplift, both religious and secular; we may well think that a little jet of the World-Spirit had been turned on in that modest school-room, whereof the receptive youth unconsciously took a long full draught. Already when he entered, the boy could read, and make figures, and probably write a little after the old English or German script. But the main study was Latin, then the mediating speech of cultured Europe, and more nearly the universal tongue of the Renaissance than any other.

It is evident that this course in Latin was very thorough. The main text-books which were used have been identified from the poet's allusions in his plays, and the method of instruction can also be made out from contemporary documents. It is said that the school opened at 6 A. M. and lasted till 5:30 P. M., with intermissions for breakfast and dinner, and with a couple of shorter recesses for recreation. That is, the boy at school then had to do a day's work extending quite through ten hours, without counting the stops. What do pupils

and parents of our time think of that? Then the chief study was Latin, Latin, Latin for dear life, as the great struggle of the age was to get hold of the implement which opened the road to the best thought of the past as well as of the present. The first educational duty of the still backward England was to connect with the whole stream of Mediterranean civilisation, and to partake of its highest spiritual fruitage, from ancient Greece and Rome down to modern Italy, to which can be appended the other Latinized countries like France and Spain. There is no doubt that Latin then was the chief literary conduit to the remoter European peoples, who partook of the new intellectual life known as the Renaissance. Hence we can understand the persistence, yea the desperation with which Latin was studied in all Teutonic countries of that time, which were then just emerging into their modern historic destiny. This school even emigrated with the English colonies to America in the Shakespearian era.

It is evident that the youth Shakespeare during those years of his freshest acquisitive powers, could take up and inoculate his budding genius with the new spirit of the time, of which that Stratford Grammar School was a manifestation as well as an instrumentality. Ten hours a day for six or seven years between the ages of seven and fourteen! The results of this considerable fragment of schooling can be traced in every drop of ink that ever flowed from his pen. To be sure, the bright boy often

wearied of the tedious drill which was probably necessary for the slower minds—that is the case still today. Nor did the merry lad have pleasant memories of his frequent trouncings, which the old pedagogues deemed the best medicine for mischief and even for mental backwardness, though the latter might have its source in a physical defect, bad eyes, for instance. Hence spring the rather ungracious slurs on schools and schoolmasters, of which quite a piquant anthology may be gathered from Shakespeare's writings. But the sufficient answer to himself is both the spirit and the knowledge which radiates everywhere from his pages.

The language teacher of to-day will be inclined to hold that the method of instruction was more internally transforming, even more deeply educative as far as it went, than that of our own time. For instance, those Stratford boys were taught not only to read Latin, but to speak it, and to understand it when spoken. Eye, ear and tongue were all practised together for winning a complete mastery over a foreign idiom. In our present Academies, High Schools, and Colleges, the chief and often the sole exercise is to translate from the dead Latin text into deader English. But the school-boy Shakespeare was trained in Latin conversation, and, after a daily practice of several years not only in reading the language but in hearing it and speaking it, had a more intimate living acquaintance with its spirit and a greater command over its structure, than any pupil is likely to have who

is taught after the manner of to-day. A little Greek the master would naturally impart to the most promising pupil of his school, for even surly Ben Johson, and perhaps envious at times, pluming himself on his University erudition, confessed that Shakespeare had some Greek though it was less than his "small Latin." Still it is probable that Shakespeare's Hellenic studies never delved very deep into the original sources.

It was chiefly the Latin poets who fed the boy's genius during his school-days. Ovid, Horace, Virgil were given in precious bits and even memorized; nor were the dramatists neglected—Seneca, Plautus, Terence. Cicero's prose, and Seneca's seemingly, would have its place in any curriculum of the Renaissance. That impress of Latin verse, which can be traced in every poem Shakespeare ever wrote, could only have been given in early years at the Stratford School. And that subtle ingrained intimacy with the Latin idiom, so that he can often be detected transferring un-English Latin words and constructions off-hand into his English, was certainly gained in his juvenile studies.

Perhaps we can put our finger upon the actual classical book which he loved most and knew best, and which had the greatest influence over him—Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This fact of him was recognized during Shakespeare's life-time by Francis Meres the critic, who speaks of "the sweet and witty soul of Ovid" as our poet's own; and

Holofernes, the schoolmaster in *Love's Labor Lost*, proclaims: "Ovidius Naso was the man, and why indeed Naso (Nosey) but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention?" Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a vast handbook of Greek Mythology turned into flowing grateful Latin hexameters, and this book became Shakespeare's abounding quarry for the mythical lore strewn all through his pages. Moreover Ovid belongs to the ancient Latin Renaissance of the Augustan age; the Gods and their deeds are no longer objects of faith, but rather of amusement and of allegorical play. Ovid narrates Greek legends as entertaining, illustrative, fanciful literature; in other words he is not primarily mythical but paramythical. Now Shakespeare uses the Greek Mythology in the same paramythical manner, which he doubtless caught and practised in his school-days. (See Goethe in the Second Part of *Faust* for the greatest modern paramyth-maker.)

Then again Ovid is the poet of love, and on this side touches a still deeper strand of affinity with the English poet. It is true that the Ovidian conception of love is relatively superficial, sensual, sportive—more that of a poetic stimulus or a pastime's plaything than of a mighty overwhelming passion. Love does not use him, but he uses love. Very different is this from Shakespeare at his highest. Still the latter, in his early comedies, shows himself as more or less Ovidian in his amatory light-hearted outpourings. But when in

his Second Period, the Dark Lady gets her full clutch in his heart, the fun turns to an intense crushing earnestness and even suffering. Love is no longer a playful little Cupid, but a death-dealing Fury who smites even her strongest devotees right and left, making them tragic. Here we may observe that Ovid, though the favorite Latin reading-book in the schools of the Renaissance and of the Middle Ages, has been quite banished from the secondary instruction of our modern time, or admitted only in an extremely jejune and expurgated form. The far chaster Virgil has driven him out, since girls have been coming to classes in Latin along with the boys, and reading its literature. But into the door of the Stratford Grammar School no maiden dared peep, though Portia of Venice knew Latin, and her like in such lore could have been found also in England. I cannot see much influence of Virgil permeating Shakespeare, in spite of some allusions, for instance to Dido's love and to the false Sinon.

It may well be asserted, though the contrary opinion is usually held, that Shakespeare could have gotten, and probably did get, considerable training in the use of his native tongue at that school. Certainly there must have been a good deal of translation from Latin into the vernacular, by those Stratford school-boys. Many a turn of Golding's English version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* has been uncovered in Shakespeare, showing that he too had in the undergraduate's slang

a "pony" at hand probably, as Golding's book was popular, and ready for him, having been printed only four years before he entered school (1567). The curious fact has been dug up that Ovid's exquisite word Titania (with its dulcet syllables and even inner rhymes) is not found in Golding, who uses the title Diana instead, but is employed at first hand by Shakespeare, who could have met it only in the original Latin, and there have felt its subtle melody, almost making us hear the moonshine's music to which the fairies dance in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Still further, Shakespeare's vernacular was deeply influenced by the English Bible, which was read in school and probably at his home. The version which he in one way or other appropriated was not that of King James, which did not appear till the poet's work was practically done (1611), but the Genevan version (1560). His poetry abounds in scriptural turns and allusions from beginning to end, showing that he was saturated with the Bible in his early years. Indeed all England was becoming in his time a people of one book, whose spirit and phraseology were taking possession of the nation's soul. That book was the great religious folk-book of the ages, the two Hebrew Testaments, with which Shakespeare's very consciousness was thoroughly infiltrated, as recent authors have shown in hundreds of parallel passages. Very suggestive is such a fact, proving that the universal poet had appropriated not only the

secular but the religious trend of his age. This is not saying that he was a learned theologian, or a violent sectary of any kind; he went neither way to extremes. It is often stated that he was a decided anti-Puritan, but the passages cited from his works do not prove the assertion. And on the other hand he was not a strict Puritan nor anything fanatical (The recent book of the Rev. Thomas Carter, *Shakespeare and Holy Scripture*, is not convincing at every point, but it shows overwhelmingly, yea surprisingly to many an old Shakespearian, how the poet was steeped through and through with biblical speech and spirit. He was like Goethe, *bibelfest*, as the Germans say—doubtless in the main through his mother's influence).

Thus Shakespeare could well have had some superb instruction in English from the printed page during his school years. The question will come up: How much better or worse is the modern professorial way which rams down the pupil's throat a crystallized vernacular with little or no fluidity or elasticity? Shakespeare himself has keenly satirized the pedantry of the linguistic pedagogues, whose trammels he must have already felt as a school-boy. To-day we flee back to his diction's freedom, for he keeps his language plastic, self-transforming, hence ever-young and ever-growing. The Olympian sovereignty over his mother-tongue may well be deemed one of Shakespeare's most masterful achievements, and it must have begun at school, though by no means confined to that one spot or to

any other. He seems to tap the creative source of all human speech, and to make it flow down into English, which, accordingly, in his work shines out as if new-made. In language as in other matters he shows his gift of transfiguration, the unique seal of his genius. Plot, character, story, word are all handed to him by time; but then just behold the grand metamorphosis!

Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

Somehow we cannot help thinking that the boy's schoolmaster or one of the two (or perhaps three there were) must have been a personal influence in the poet's development, though no record gives us permission to say so. Simon Hunt, B. A., graduate of Oxford and hence a classical scholar of some attainments, is handed down as the principal of the school during five years of young Shakespeare's stay. Did that teacher not soon discern the brightest youth among his pupils and foster his talent with some special instruction, for which he certainly had time during those long dragging school-hours? Possibly he may have glimpsed in him the rising genius of the age, and nourished its peculiar bent by the tales of classic heroes, being himself a good story-teller gifted with imagination and humor. Such country schoolmasters of the old style we have seen here in our American West, who could tell again the tale of Troy to their boys

with the zest of an ancient Homeric rhapsode. One thing is certain: Shakespeare was veritably soaked in the antique Mythos, so that it became structural in his brain-work, a living ingredient of his whole mental make-up. Where and how did he get it? Not after he went to London, he was then too busy and in fact too old; at Stratford was its original winning, being appropriated largely from the school and the schoolmaster there. So we dare think without specially documented proof. Then into this classical fund the quick-witted lad must have spun the native home-grown Mythos, which naturally flowed from the lips of the people at large and from his own home-folk, specially his mother and his aunts; six of the latter we must remember, two of them husbandless.

Much valuable knowledge for his future career Shakespeare the school-boy must have gained during these years of youthful acquisition. But one book seems to stand out above all others for its compatibility with his budding genius as well as for its permanent influence over his life: the already mentioned *Metamorphoses* by the Roman poet Ovid. But Shakespeare must have felt something deeper in this book than the easy-sailing narrative, or the liquid hexametral verse, or even the golden cadence of its poetry, which his *Holofernes* so praises. He foreboded his own deepest self in that idea of *Metamorphosis*, the very potentiality of his coming genius. For is he not able to metamorphose himself and his experience into all forms of humanity,

into those hundreds of characters of his dramas, as if they were just his own manifold self-realisation? It is true that one finds no such creative genius as Shakespeare in the personality of Ovid, far from it; still there lies the deeper suggestion in that word *Metamorphosis* which the Roman poet picked up quite externally from Greek Mythology, and superficialized into little more than agreeable story-telling. Originally in the Hellenic mind it had a much profounder meaning which Shakespeare must have presaged as the genetic power underneath all these divine transformations. There seems to us already hinted in the process of *Metamorphosis* that unique transfiguration of Man and the World, which we have already remarked as the most characteristic stamp of our poet's genius. We may also dream, for it can do us no harm, that his mother divined some such endowment in her boy when she gave him a copy of just this book of Ovid, as already we have dramatically hearkened him saying: "My mother gave it me."

Let another little fact be here set down which the reader may cap out with some more of his dreamery, if he be in the mood. A copy of the famous Aldine (Venetian) edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* printed in 1502 can be seen in the Bodleian library with an inscription on the title somehow thus: Wm. She., which certain experts affirm to be the poet's genuine hand-writing. Did he buy the work on his Italian trip at Venice, perchance from some book-selling Aldus? Or is this

the very copy which already at Stratford the boy received from his mother, who got it—whence? Enough.

But now comes the cardinal fact that the school-boyhood of William Shakespeare is brought to close somewhat prematurely. It is conjectured that his father withdrew him from his studies and set him to work to help gain the family's livelihood. We question if this be the true reason. Our surmise is that Shakespeare of his own account quit school because he was dissatisfied with the new master, who had succeeded in 1577 his old and favorite teacher, Simon Hunt. If the boy had wished to go on with his education, his mother and the Ardens would have certainly found the way. Such a change of instructors is still a source of school-leaving. Thomas Jenkins has been handed down as the name of the new master, who in a couple of years seems to have lost his position, as he was probably a misfit from the start. Doubtless too he was a Welshman, whose Latin is burlesqued in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Some such unpleasant memory is the cause of Shakespeare's satirical portraits of pedagogues in his earlier dramas, like that of Holofernes and his other pedants. And the school and the school-boy himself are not spared, as we can catch him limned in the well-known passage:

. . the whining school-boy with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school —

so we may image the lad Willie Shakespeare, prompted by his mother, to saunter slowly down the Stratford street to the school-house, where rules the hated dominie, ferule in hand, who may have flogged him the first day, the mischievous urchin and incipient dramatist full of young mockery, which pulses through his penpoint long afterwards into his London caricatures.

What follows? I think we can detect the older reminiscent Shakespeare telling on his youthful self when he makes the school-boy, after quitting his books, pass into the next stage, that of Nature's sensuous evolution:

And then the lover,
Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

True certainly of Shakespeare now becoming the adolescent versifier. And so we have reached the passioning juvenile poet who begins to write tender love-rhymes in response to the elemental urge of early human emotion. Of course the songful heart of the lad just turning into his teens may have begun already at school to burgeon with little amatory versicles, to which both nature and art were giving him the inner push as well as the outer example.

But the main point for his future unique greatness is that the young Shakespeare, now at the most absorbent and apperceptive time of life, communes with and takes up into himself the primal

race-civilizing Mediterranean culture, both mythical and historical, religious and secular, Classic and Hebrew, Heathen and Christian. Moreover he begins to fuse this Southern cultural strain of the noblest past with the Northern elemental energy of the outbursting Anglo-Saxon present, crude as yet but mightily creative. Indeed Shakespeare may be deemed the literary reconciler of Roma and Teutonia, otherwise so irreconcilable. For the recent world-war was at its start but another outbreak of the bi-millennial feud between the North and South of Europe, between the Teutonic and the Latin civilisations, both of which William Shakespeare (as we shall often note hereafter) sought to take up into his personal culture, marrying them harmoniously in his art, and thereby expressing their unity throughout his Life-drama.

IV.

THE ADOLESCENT SHAKESPEARE.

After leaving school when he was thirteen or fourteen, there is a total gap in the record of his life which lasts some four or five years. Only one dubious and meagre anecdote told long afterwards by gossipy Aubrey fills the ominous vacancy, and thus it runs: Young Shakespeare is said to have assisted his father in the latter's trade, which was then that of a butcher. Our informant adds, with a fabulous tinge: "When he killed a calf, he

would do it in high style and make a speech.''
Possibly this is a popular echo of the boy's native bent toward the drama already manifesting itself in his daily task.

The much deeper question, however, springs up: What salient experiences of life was the coming poet to get and to lay up from the time of his quitting school till his marriage, say from his fourteenth till his nineteenth year? The turning and trying period of youth is this in the development of the human being, both mentally and bodily; it is the transitional time of life's adolescence, when nature drives the incarnate person toward creation, and mind follows in nature's wake. It becomes the starting-point of many activities, physical and spiritual; especially does the distinctive individuality of the man now begin to test itself, and to grope about in its environment for its needed food. The adolescent Shakespeare must have started to show the original and originating Shakespeare, his mind would swell to bud forth that special form which it afterward matured, expanding to seek for those experiences which were fitted to nourish its growth.

But now this capital stage of his evolution we are wholly to conjecture, inasmuch as it is rather the blankest chasm in Shakespeare's whole biography as far as documents are concerned. What then is to be done? We must construe these four or five years from what he knew and wrought in his later fulfilment; we can look from the height of the

mountain and measure, in part at least, what lies at the base. Moreover adolescence has its common character, its general outline in all mankind, yea its principles which every man knows from his own experience and also from literature.

I. We believe that he kept up his studies after quitting school, doubtless in a somewhat desultory way but still effective. Every ambitious boy would do so, has done so, and will do so again. Especially Latin, probably his favorite branch, never fell out of his mind; there is ample evidence that he knew it and read it after he went to London and became a writer of plays, in which work he shows his acquaintance, even if limited, with ancient Roman Literature. Moreover he could easily obtain help at Stratford from the schoolmaster, from the clergyman, and from other educated people of the town and neighborhood, most of whom would naturally take an interest in the aspiring boy, who is seeking to improve himself under adverse circumstances. Have we not all seen the same thing to-day, even in the frontier towns of America? Then the mother at home would certainly encourage her promising son, especially as her other sons seem not to have shown any capacity or zeal for improvement. Hints of this maternal pride in himself the poet mirrored long afterward in Volumnia, mother of Coriolanus. Her family, the Ardens, well-off and influential, would not fail to give encouragement to the bright scion of the kindred.

John Shakespeare, the father, during these years was falling deeper and deeper into financial misfortune and personal insignificance. Moreover the town, Stratford, had become a sinking community, having lost slowly its former prosperity and importance. Young Shakespeare could not help observing this decline, and would turn for assistance to his mother and her wealthier people. Probably John Shakespeare, rustic and plebeian, had small patience with the son's studies, and would crush him down into continuous hard work for the sake of wresting from his earnings a little more money. But the mother saw to it that her boy Willie had his chance. At least we dare so construe the relation in that family, even if the poet has left no such lasting poetic record of his father as of his mother.

At this point we cannot help thinking of another great character, Abraham Lincoln, whose adolescent years were guarded for study by his mother (in this case, his step-mother) against the pressure of an unappreciative father. In Herndon's report she is recorded as saying: "I induced my husband to permit Abe to study at home as well as at school. At first he (the husband) was not easily reconciled to it," but she had her way. In that noisy Lincoln household "we took particular pains not to disturb the boy—would let him read on and on till he quit of his own accord." If Abraham Lincoln, why not William Shakespeare? In fact Lincoln's opportunities for education were far inferior, certainly

not a quarter of those of Shakespeare. Lincoln himself declared that "the aggregate of his schooling did not amount to one year", and that little in a remote backwoods school. The following bit is also from his pen: if a straggling teacher "supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard." Yet which of the two has written the more eternal English words: Shakespeare or Lincoln? The Tribunal of the Ages must wait a while to decide; eternity is not here yet.

II. During this time the investigating youth must have become acquainted with his environment—both his special community and the surrounding country. The processes of farm-life he picked up, and probably he took a hand in tilling the soil along with his father's people, the Shakespeares. That basic culture of society and also its poetical substrate, agriculture, we find ingrained both in his language and in his thought. Then the many festivities connected with rural life he must have seen and shared in, for we find them recurring with zest in his plays. He shows an intimate knowledge of sports—hunting, hawking, cock-fighting, bear-baiting; evidently he liked dogs and horses at first hand. Festivals also he would attend and appropriate as a poetic phase of his little world; pageants, religious and secular, become a part not only of his knowledge but of his very consciousness during these years, and manifest their influence directly in his dramas till the close of his days.

His calendar often recalled the saints and their days prescribed by the old church—St. George and the Dragon, Easter, Lammas tide. May-day with its pole and dance and poetry was one of his delights. From his allusions we know that he took pleasure in the tale of Robin Hood and the group of Outlaws who had fled to the forest, and he may have played or even dramatized the story in his youth. Doubtless from it he derived the first hint of that flight from society to the unsocial woods, which runs through so many of his plays; the adolescent evidently made his own this legend, once the most popular of rural England. Through the neighboring Forest of Arden he could ramble, and dream himself escaping from the troubles and wrongs of the town and home. And why should not his rambles have extended to the dreamy mountains of Wales, the right home of his elfin folks? So he must have won the creative experience for that flight in his dramas to a primitive condition, or to an idyllic love-world, such as we see in his *As You Like It*.

The negative or nether side of life he would curiously dip into during this inquisitive time. He doubtless came to know somewhat of every tap-room in little Stratford, and there were thirty of them, according to an accepted report. Crapulous Eastcheap of his London days the alert poetic apprentice glimpsed already at Stratford, along with Falstaff and his jolly crowd of bummers. The poet-haunted Mermaid, the London tavern of the

Muses, could hardly have shown him Sir Toby Belch and the gang of Falstaffian low-lived revelers, who belong to the Shakespearian universe, and to the Lord's also, it would seem.

III. During these formative years young Shakespeare could have witnessed a good deal of acting by professional players. As yet the Puritan opposition to the drama had not overtaken Stratford, as it did later. In fact, several times in the course of the year different troupes would play at the town-hall. It may be said that the rising consciousness of England in its highest literary expression was getting to be dramatic—which tendency in the boy was to culminate hereafter in the man Shakespeare. So this little speck of theatrical Stratford in his evolution became a preparation and a prophecy.

Thus while these adolescent years ran on, there was enough opportunity for Shakespeare to find himself, to feel the innate bent of his own spirit which deeply partook of that of the age. Then he had some theoretic knowledge of the drama of the past; comic Plautus he could well have read at the Stratford Grammar School, and perchance have dipped into tragic Seneca—both these Roman dramatists he designates in his *Hamlet*. Little theatricals among the town's people were not wanting, in response to the push of the time. Even "the rude mechanicals" of *Midsummer Night's Dream* the boy could easily have witnessed at Stratford in their suggestion if not in their crass reality.

It is, therefore, our view that Shakespeare began to feel his budding career in this open inquisitive adolescent period of life. In other words, he became desperately stage-struck, and never could again be at peace with himself, till he had done his duty toward the call of his genius by becoming a dramatist. Under this spur he finally pushed for London, and there he soon found his congenial environment, whence he started upward. In fact adolescence is just the time for getting stage-struck in boy or girl, when nature makes her prime creative lurch both in body and mind, and drives toward her original gift's gratification.

IV. There can be little doubt of his pushing to write in these tentative years. Along with the flowering of the poet's adolescence would come the intense desire for self-expression, especially in a creative genius which must out. Already at the Grammar School he could hardly escape a good deal of practice through his translation of Latin poetry into the vernacular, under the critical eye of his master. Some popular forms of verse in this lyrical time of life, for instance the ballad and the song, he had already often heard and imitated, at the same time sipping at the first fount of folklore. But now he begins to translate not Latin so much as his own life's experience, external and internal, into his English idiom.

One thinks that droplets of these early versicles may have seeped through into the later layers of his poetry. He often introduces snatches of some

singing ballad into his dramatic situations, poetical jetsam which could well have floated down from the present time of native song-bubbles. There are several sonnets, especially the last two, which do not rise above the clever metering adolescent, as well as not a few dialogues in his plays which rollic about somewhat boyish. I believe that *Venus and Adonis* is essentially his poem of adolescence and its passion, even if he made additions and changes before its publication in 1593. For the theme of this poem is sensuous love in all its adolescent exhilaration and exuberance. And musical became his spirit's attunement, as this is the time for the soul's most exquisite response to the concordance of sweet sounds. Adolescence is the world in which to thrill and to dance in answer to nature. All through Shakespeare's dramas warbles his love of music—did he as a boy play any instrument? The town-fiddler existed at Stratford as everywhere, with his little band of "twangling Jacks"; we may glimpse them in *Romeo and Juliet*, headed seemingly by Simon Catling (modern cat-gut scraper). And the village song-singer did not fail, nor the verse-spouter like Lincoln's Jack Kelso of vanished New Salem, who is supposed to have introduced Shakespeare to the lifelong love of our great American President. Recall the death-foreboding Lincoln on his last trip, when he was heard to voice his dark presentiment in the words of the poet, as they haunted him with their ominous prophecy and gave him their unearthly

power to express himself in the very presence of his own Fate:

Duncan is in his grave,
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well,
Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor
poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.

V. Somewhat after the preceding manner we are going to assume that the young Shakespeare gave evidence of his talent to his community, which recognized him as its bright lad. Every little American town selects instinctively its best man, and likewise its best boy, often hailing the latter as its youthful prodigy, and the coming President of the United States. And so in its way did little Stratford, which could also give to its favorite the very human counterstroke of petty jealousy. But the town was large enough to feel the spirit of the time, and to respond to all forms of the drama which were then fermenting—the newer histories, comedies, tragedies, as well as the earlier interludes, moralities, mysteries even pantomimes and dumb-shows. Such were some of the cruder materials which the adolescent Shakespeare now appropriated from his home-town and its neighborhood, and which he is to transform into his future life-work. England's dramatic protoplasm we may deem it, now everywhere yeasting with its coming supreme literary expression.

Shakespeare will show these elemental ingredients in all his later productions; several of them may be traced even in his greatest *Hamlet*.

During this time we have to think that Shakespeare won his unique intimacy with immediate Nature, which he shows in all his writ, and which often tingles him to a creative participation in her subtlest processes. Dame Nature he must have observed and experienced in her secretest haunts, as well as in her very act of genesis. Particularly the vegetable kingdom he indwelt, since he so often metamorphoses the plant into poetry. He seems to have possessed an inborn flower-soul, if we may judge by the garlands which he weaves and strews along his path even in gardenless London. Here one thinks of his women whose speech and character he can turn to a human inflorescence and bloom-fragrance. Perhaps too he caught up all these names of flowers strown over his book from his mother and his aunts, who must have cultivated their household garden.

If we compare this present adolescent time with his former school time, we find that each furnishes its own distinctive strand to his future work and character. The one gives him culture the other hands him over to nature; the one is past and Classic the other is present and English; more theoretical the one, more practical the other; thus he passes from study to experience, appropriating first what is foreign, and then what is native to the soil. This two fold strain we can trace all through

his dramas, constituting often their two threads, the upper and the lower, the cultural and the natural, the aristocratic and the popular, the one usually cadencing verse and the other talking prose. Still more deeply we may glimpse in this dualism that of Southern and Northern Europe, of the Mediterranean world and the Germanic, hinting the centuries' strife between Roma and Teutonia still active to-day, indeed just now closing its latest and bloodiest assize.

Thus we dare construe that the youth William Shakespeare in two successive eras of his juvenile training took up into himself the two chief strains of European civilisation. Unconscious of this ultimate fact of his education, he nevertheless imbibed it as an embryo which he will hereafter mightily evolve and utter, for just that is the burden of his genius. Moreover he must have felt the difference, yea the conflict between these two world-views and their peoples, for his work hereafter is to bring them together and to reconcile them in his way, which is that of art, specially the dramatic.

VI. But from this far-away look into elsewhere, we shall now turn and take a peep down into his heart where is already swelling and bursting up into utterance that sovereign emotional nature of his, which on the whole must be acclaimed his most compelling power over his fellow-man. Is not Shakespeare the greatest lover that ever lived and the most contagious? Indeed he never stops giving vent to this adolescent fire of his soul till the cur-

tain falls on his old-age; for instance, we feel its glow still in his *Tempest*, well-taken as the grand finale of his Life-drama. Rightly love may be regarded as his most universal theme, to which he gives his deepest intensive expression both in its godlike and demonlike manifestations, portraying its destructive as well as its constructive energy.

Here we touch the largest, strongest, most lasting experience of the poet Shakespeare—his love's defeats and triumphs, his own heart's tragedies and comedies, which his genius poured forth into the enduring word. He was certainly endowed with more than his quota of love's ecstasies and tortures. The primal outburst of this mighty energy would naturally take place during these youthful years. The Titanic adolescent must have quaked with the tempestuous ups and downs of his elemental passion, which now distinctly opens its sluices and never ceases its overflow into his utterance. No personal record we have of Shakespeare's early love-throes, such as we possess of Goethe and of Dante. But Shakespeare seems to have had a huger volcano of adolescence aflame with love in his young heart than either the German or the Italian poet, though they were by no means wanting in this two-edged gift of the Gods.

Finally the slow years touch the swift moment when his love or his passion suddenly flares up into a flame of fame or notoriety which seems to increase with time till now. A little rural affair of heart has caused more discussion than any other

biographic fact of Shakespeare. The bound-bursting passionate youth has reached the breaking point of his years of mentionless obscurity and erupts into fierce spoken daylight; adolescence pushes him forth to its extreme in the deed.

So we come to the role of Anne Hathaway in Shakespeare's Life-drama, through which she plays under a diversity of masked forms from beginning to end, and even beyond the poet's end she holds out, living longer than he did. His most cardinal experience of Stratford is fatefully connected with her name and with her woman-nature; in fact it may be said that without her part, this Life-drama of the poet in its present shape is quite inconceivable. Let us see if we can catch through the intervening and distorting centuries some right glimpse of Shakespeare's wife, and of her contribution to his life's discipline and expression.

V.

SHAKESPEARE'S MARRIAGE.

Overhasty, compulsory, secret—who was to blame, he, she, or both, or perchance neither? Such is the problem or chain of problems, which looms up at the present turn of the poet's life before every reader of Shakespeare, man and especially woman, and which is capable of being looked at from many a little nook of defense and of attack, or of simple curious neutrality. The daring boy

seems to break out of adolescence into marriage at one jump along with the sun. For it so happens that the long night of the previous five years is now suddenly dispersed by the daylight of authentic evidence; co-temporary documents can be cited for every step in this far-reaching, deeply determining crisis of his career.

Fact first is that toward the end of 1582, young William Shakespeare, then a little more than eighteen years and a half old, was married to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a substantial yeoman of Shottery in the neighborhood of Stratford, the wife being some eight years older than the husband, according to the inscription on her tombstone which in such case would be most likely to tell the naked truth. Fact second informs us that in less than six months after the marriage rite, a child, Susanna, was born to the pair, the baptism of the infant being of record in the Stratford Church under the date of May 26th 1583. Fact third is that a written instrument exists indicating that the marriage must have taken place in quite a hurry, namely "with once asking the bans of matrimony", instead of the customary three times with intervals between. Of course there was good reason for this unusual precipitation. Fact fourth brings us the surprise that the parents of the bridegroom, who was a minor and hence still an infant in law, are not mentioned in the marriage bond, and evidently were not present at the final ceremony. On the other hand the bride's people and

friends were in emphatic evidence through all the proceedings. Hence it has been inferred that the act of marriage was kept secret from the Shakespeares and the Ardens. Verily a hurried, one-sided, clandestine affair, in which the infant William Shakespeare gets a wife and also an infant of his own, passing out of his previous eclipse into the full blaze of a famous deed and eternal on account of the eternity of the man.

Many have been the censures and their rebuttals, many the explanations and apologies as well as invectives and scandal-mongerings swathing about this first great adventure of the youthful poet; but let them pass. Our part is to accept it as a fact coloring all his days afterward, as a pivotal experience in his destiny, without which he probably never would have turned down the road from Stratford to London, and, who can tell?—might never have become Shakespeare the dramatist.

But the deed is done, the whole secret gets out and is scattered broadcast by busy tongues ever ready to volunteer in such a telling cause. Scandal-mongering was then and still is a popular entertainment, for man and woman. Stratford won a name for success in this business, if in none other. But the families concerned must have had their own cud for silent rumination. Even the dismal antiquarian would break a smile, if he could dig up what the Shakespeares said on the occasion, contemplating this escapade of the finest scion labeled with their name. And what would the aristocratic

Ardens whisper through their startled household, especially the two spinster aunts? Would their barbed tongues spare those plebeian Hathaways? But oh! what a heart-break would the mother, Mary Arden Shakespeare, sigh forth at this mesalliance of her darling boy, who had already shown the most promising mind of the whole connection, and for whom she had such a high ambition, especially in the way of matching him properly, that prime maternal duty! Her one bright hope darkens to despair, as she is compelled to swallow this bitterest dose of her motherhood. Poor woman! she already had much to suffer from her husband's ever-deepening failure in life, with possible reproaches from her kin for her own early mesalliance. And now her boy, pride and prop of her advancing days, has married a peasant girl, and soon has a six months' baby on hand. Fate of the parent of genius it seems; Frau Rath, mother of Goethe, had even a harder trial.

But we emphatically maintain that after the first shock had passed, the poet's mother clung to her son, and did what was possible for him and his under the circumstances. And he never forgot her devotion at his most trying ordeal of fate. Many years later, a quarter of a century in fact, he celebrated her as "the most noble mother in the world" under the guise of the Roman matron, Volumnia, and confessed

There's no man in the world
More bound to his mother.

All of which we construe as a debt of gratitude paid in the worthiest way he could pay it, when he had returned a rich and famous man to Stratford from London.

After another year and nine months, Anne, Shakespeare's spouse, gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl who were named Hamnet and Judith after Hamnet Sadler and his wife Judith, known as Shakespeare's friends. And evidently staunch friends they were in the pinch of sorest need, being held worthy to receive such marked recognition instead of either of the kindred families, which might shun the honor. The baptism of the twins, probably three days after their birth, is dated, Feb. 2nd, 1585. Shakespeare must have lived toward three years with his wife before leaving for London. It was no easy time for the young pair. The boy-husband had no independent means of livelihood. His father, sunken in fortune, could do nothing for his son, and was probably in ill humor at the match besides. Of course, the rich blue-blooded Ardens averted their eyes and their cash from the scapegrace of their blood. How did the couple live? Support must have come largely from the side of the wife. Anne had some money of her own inherited from her father, who had died shortly before her marriage. Doubtless she possessed other means, but probably not much. Shelter for the pair must have been found with her relatives in the cottage at Shottery—with the Hathaways, not with the Shakespeares or Ardens.

But in the flow of the exacting years her funds must have commenced to run low, and the young husband's few wage pennies would not suffice. Probably at this point her tongue broke loose, and he had to listen to many a reproach for the insufficient support of his family. Well, she had some provocation; similar upbraidings from the mouth of the ill-supported wife are not unknown to-day. Of some such experience Shakespeare has left as mementos conjugal pictures in several of his earlier plays. The scolding wife Adriana in *Comedy of Errors* has altogether more red blood in her conduct and words than any other character of the play, so that we begin to think she must have been photographed from the living model. Then the *Taming of the Shrew* is rather tame till Katherine, the shrew, begins to make the argument lively with her tongue and her caprices, which Petruchio in the play has to meet and put down, though Shakespeare himself fled from the task. Other lesser instances might be traced in his more youthful dramas, showing that a slashing termagant had spun a quivering thread through his Life-drama, and left vivid memories, which it is his peculiar gift of genius to transmute to acting persons on the stage.

Another reminiscence of his marriage portion he bore with him to the end of his days—the picture of the jealous woman or several pictures taken of her, the same example being used in several attitudes or on different occasions, when he was lashed

scornfully by her tongue's scourge. Here again we are inclined to see that the wife had a good deal of provocation. That young husband, talented and gallant, eight years her junior, had been a free rover and lover among the country-girls around Stratford, and probably did not renounce fully the habit after a forced wedlock. Of these female rivals Anne Hathaway had been the one who had caught him, being at the same time caught herself. She must have known well the situation, which by the way is highly conducive to jealousy: husband more youthful, higher-born, better educated, with that poetic gift of making sweet love-verses on the spot. Hence she would naturally call him to a reckoning for any little absence out of hours, or for any stray look of his toward another woman, which she might detect. The female character Adriana (already alluded to) in *Comedy of Errors* has her tongue sharpened to the keenest edge by her jealousy, with which so many of Shakespeare's women are touched more or less stressfully. Nor are his men, including himself, devoid of this passion; best known is Othello. But Anne Hathaway will be amply avenged by the Dark Lady, who tortures her poet more than Anne ever did or could her husband.

Possibly this wedding experience may help account for another fact in Shakespearian portraiture. He had the tendency to make the girl chase after her lover: against which many a high-spirited female reader has been heard loudly to

protest, and one male reader I know of. In an overflowing juvenile play, *Love's Labor's Lost*, he causes a group of four high-bred, daring young-women to storm the Castle of Learning, which they know is occupied by four young gentlemen who have taken the vow of celibacy: "not to see a woman." What a libel on the sex! Probably Shakespeare could cite in defense from his own book of life that Anne Hathaway had stormed his Castle without his consent by sheer violence, and that her love's labors were not lost. It looks as if she took the initiative from the first eye-glance. But the most courageous, victorious man-hunter in our Shakespeare's book of ladies is the heroine set forth in *All's Well That Ends Well*, the redoubtable Helena, whose mighty will is able to stake her womanly honor that she win to be her husband the man whom she loves. Dare we not imagine that in portraying such a conqueress the poet felt the echo of a far-off experience of his own with Anne Hathaway? At any rate she trapped her prize, namely a husband, by a similar device, even if disguised with some thin variations.

Still we feel in duty bound to speak a good word for Anne Hathaway, even if she, being eight years older than her boy-lover, may have to take the chief blame for their common slip, especially from her own sex. But if she did more than her share of the loving and marrying, on the other hand she did more than her share in the maintenance of the new-born family. That she expressed at times to

her youthful help-meet his lack of help with some asperity of temper, is excusable, even if not altogether admirable. Mark well that she with her relatives in the old farm house at Shottery must have fed the children of William Shakespeare for years, till he was able to send some remittances from London. We believe that the poet himself did not fail to appreciate her devoted struggle for his three babes, and when he had won his economic independence, he returned to her and to them at Stratford, providing for his family one of the finest houses in town. Of the two she was not the greater sinner, and he knew it well, and his justice, and still more we believe, his generosity certainly would acknowledge the fact.

To be sure, theirs was not an ideal marriage at the start, nor an ideal bond through life. Anne Hathaway was her husband's inferior in intellect and education, not to speak of social rank. A true and fitting union would be of head and heart as well as of appetite, and it is probable that her greater age lessened even love's sensuous appeal, especially with the exacting years of her maternal task. We can understand, though we may not justify, the poet's demonic but productive infatuation for a talented, witty, high-bred, much younger woman, who as the Dark Lady will hereafter stir the most exalted strains of his Muse. Still I do not believe with some fault-scenting, rather misogynistic Shakespearians that the poet ever was completely estranged from his wife, the

mother of his three children, and their faithful nurse through their long and trying infantile poverty. His magnanimity would certainly forgive, yea justify her early tongue-lashings as not altogether undeserved. They probably ceased with a full coffer. Moreover I can see him return to Stratford after eleven years (in 1596) when husband and wife met in reconciliation over the grave of their dead son Hamnet—doubtless the hardest blow of fate that ever smote the poet.

So we conceive Anne Hathaway's part in Shakespeare's Life-drama. It is evident that he in his later years did not deem his escapade the auspicious way of getting married. In *Twelfth Night* he gives a warning spoken from his own experience: "Let still the woman take an elder than herself" as a married mate. Even stronger does wise Prospero emphasize his admonition: "If thou dost break her virgin knot before" the marriage rite, the result will be "barren hate, sour-eyed disdain and discord", so that "you shall hate it both", namely "the union of your bed." Thus in his last drama we catch a forbidding echo of his early relation to Anne Hathaway. Then again in *Measure for Measure* the movement is to rescue from the clutch of the law a man who is guilty of Shakespeare's youthful deed.

Still when all is told, we are not to forget that Shakespeare went back to his wife and family at Stratford in the plenitude of his fortune and fame, and sought to share with them all he had won in

the way of distinction and wealth. Such an act can only be construed as a kind of atonement for the past, of which feeling Shakespeare's later works are full. There breathes a spirit of repentance and expiation through his concluding dramas, whose deepest note is restorative, reconciling, mediatorial. I read amendment and reparation in these later actions of Shakespeare at Stratford, which bear their import also for Anne Hathaway. Thus his writ mirrors to the last his soul's deepest experience.

The words of Prospero in the *Tempest*, probably the poet's final play, hint his cardinal change of spirit, really the transition to his closing Period of forgiveness and atonement out of his tragic time of fury:

with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being
penitent
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go release them,
Ariel—

which may also be conceived as Shakespeare's own release.

Contrition, confession, inner absolution are of course far more directly and personally expressed in the sonnets than in the dramas. An example may be cited (119):

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears
Distilled from limbecks fowl as Hell
within—

O benefit of ill! now find I true
That better is by evil still made better!
And ruined love when it is built anew,
Grows fairer than at first, more strong,
far greater;
So I return rebuked to my content
And gain by ill thrice more than I have
spent.

This gives a very suggestive glimpse of Shakespeare's philosophy of life, such as he reached in his later time through the experience of evil, which he has been able to transmute into positive good or benefit. And that once "ruined love" being now "built anew, grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater." We are to remember that these sonnets, first published in 1609, have many hints of his return and restoration to Stratford both spatial and spiritual, where was enacted the scene of his first "ruined love." But the deeper turn here is the very process of his new reconciliation, telling in the lines the real unmasked message of the poet's own self, of his stripped ego, which has to be more or less disguised in his dramatic personages.

Here it is worth while to add another sonnet composed in the same penitential mood which shows the man at his own soul's confessional (146):

Poor soul, the center of my sinful earth,
Thralled by these rebel powers that thee
array,

Why dost 'thou pine within and suffer
dearth?—

Within be fed, without be rich no more,
So shalt thou feed on Death that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more
dying then.

For me this is one of the subtlest, deepest insights of Shakespeare, which we shall not fail to stress again, intimating, as it does, what is the supreme function of the individual in this existence of ours: he is to conquer Death, and thus win his immortality. Evidently Shakespeare saw or felt in his loftier contemplative mood, perchance during his Stratford retreat, which gave him time and repose, that he had achieved this ultimate aim of all Life: namely the undoing of Death, Life's last enemy. Still deeper we may peer into the depths of the foregoing utterance, which gleams to us destruction as finally self-destroying or negation as self-negative: "Death once dead", being served up to itself by man, "there's no more dying then". Lastly we may here catch Shakespeare wielding the sudden lightning flash of mind known to some of the world's greatest thinkers as the Dialectic (not our so-called dialectics by any means) and we query: where did he get that? Enough of this for the present, but more anon perchance.

In such fashion, we put together the first stage and the last of Shakespeare's marriage, both occurring at Stratford and constituting two memorable turns of his life's total discipline. But there was an intermediate time, that of his separation from family and town, and therewith his flight to a very different environment, that of a great city with its vaster outlook and opportunity.

VI.

DEPARTURE FROM STRATFORD.

It is not known on what day of what month of the year 1585, this date also being questioned, the clock struck the time for Shakespeare to quit his birthplace and to start on a new career in a new world. The youthful limit-breaker had probably felt the longing, and even cherished the secret resolve to take such a step out of his narrow environment, which was ever becoming more unbearable to his aspiring spirit. Already young men of Stratford had broken loose into the greater field of the city; why not he? At any rate somewhere toward the end of the mentioned year (1585), he cast his farewell look at his twin babes, Hamnet and Judith, then not far from weaning time; surely he would give them a kiss, though "muling and puking" in papa's arms. But soon he turned down the road toward London, already the goal of his poetic dreams. We venture to say that his

tender heart throbbed more than one tear, as he looked back and saw the spire of the Stratford Church slowly sink out of vision, possibly with the dim but daring presentiment that he would one day be buried under it as a world-hero, to whose tomb pilgrimages would be made from the ends of the earth, while time lasted, perchance.

There is little doubt that his situation at home was galling. The rustic but laborious Hathaways would see in him a hungry leech on their estate. The snappy wife would cut his pride by letting him feel his dependence on her people, snarling many a plebeian sneer at his pretentious aristocratic kin, the Aldens. Doubtless he would hear at Shottery contempt for his father, poor John Shakespeare, and ever growing poorer till he sank all his wife's property, along with his own, into hopeless indebtedness. Not a pleasant home was that for all-attuning William Shakespeare with his unappreciative helpmeet and three drooling and prattling babes. It may be that he was even invited to leave, kicked out as it were by those hard-fisted leathery-palmed sons of toil, the agricultural Hathaways, who had more than Hotspur's contempt for anything like poetry, which must have already become young Shakespeare's all-engrossing passion and mental occupation. How could he help yielding to the Titanic drive of his genius now bursting into its early flower?

It is, therefore, very probable that the young poet, whose nature kept bubbling over with verses

on all occasions during these years (from eighteen to twenty-one), the very heyday of sudden spontaneous poetic eruptions, was not a good laborer at the plough or in the harvest-field. With the strict farmer's criterion of steady work the rollicking rhymester does not harmonize, and he would find little sympathy in that prosaic household with its treadmill tasks. What a nuisance he made of himself spouting his jingles and love-ditties at those rustic philistines instead of putting his hand on his hoe and keeping it there, as they did! Still we may imagine our ever-poetizing Willie seated at the kitchen fire-side, and in reply to some scornful fling of the boors coruscating bright metaphors, "while greasy Joan doth keel the pot."

Doubtless the boy-poet, sprinkling his inopportune and often stinging satirical versicles upon everything and everybody about him, must have met with vengeful rebuffs. His gift could not help calling forth many a frown from its victims, and many a sharp word of jealous disparagement. Can we catch some scene out of his later books in which he pictures this experience of his under a mask of course, but pulsing its words directly from his own life? The following lines seem to us a reporter's jotting of something heard on the spot, possibly around the rustic hearth at Shottery:

I had rather be a kitten and cry mew
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers,
I had rather hear a brazen canstick turned,
Or a dry wheel grate on an axle-tree.

Very rural are these telling comparisons, natural product of the farm-house, which still farther expresses its disgust in its own range of images:

And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
Nothing so much as mincing poetry,
'Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag.

Thus young Shakespeare's poetic art appeared to his peasant environment as unnatural, forced, trivial. To be sure, it is Hotspur who is here speaking, but the part hardly suits him, the aristocrat, and we feel it to be Shakespeare's own sketch of himself as conceived by the rustic clod-hopper, and flung spitefully into his own face.

Nor should we fail to notice in this connection that haughty Hotspur also voices Shakespeare's contempt for Welsh folklore and perchance superstition, with which Glendower keeps seething over on all occasions, telling of those miraculous appearances, "the earth did shake when I was born", and "the heavens were all on fire", which supernatural signs "have marked me as extraordinary", so that "I am not in the roll of common men." Furthermore Hotspur complains that Glendower "held me last night at least nine hours in reckoning up the several devils' names that were his lackeys." This tingles evidently a Shakespearian echo of some personal experience. Thus into the mouth of Hotspur Shakespeare puts his own considerable acquaintance with that effervescent Welsh imagination as he heard it at work in his youth

along the border in and around Stratford. Moreover the Welshman and the Englishman are here placed in sharp contrast as regards their distinctive spiritual attributes. Hotspur, also addicted to flurries of fantasy, is never their victim but stays anchored in his clear understanding, while Glendower is shown the thrall of his fertile imagination, even if he employs with cunning purpose mystification as a means of power.

The drama from which these extracts are taken (Henry IV, First Part) is full of the poet's youthful reminiscences of Stratford, and reminds of the town's frontier character. Doubtless he had seen instances of what happened to Mortimer: "my wife can speak no English, I no Welsh." Also Welsh songs are sung and Welsh dialogue is spoken in this drama, both of which the boy may well have heard not only in the streets but also on the little town-stage at Stratford, for the place was bi-lingual, having many Welsh and half-Welsh inhabitants. How much of the Welsh tongue the spry-witted boy Shakespeare may have picked up from his surroundings, cannot now be guessed; but of his funny studies in the Welsh-English brogue we have considerable samples in the word-twists of Parson Evans and Captain Fluellin.

The open-minded reader cannot help feeling the personal element in all these scenes; they are drawn from the immediate experiences of the dramatist himself, who here transmutes them into his most vivid spontaneous poetry. One other passage

of like pith we should take from Shakespeare's note-book, whose content was inscribed at least upon his brain at Shottery:

. Oh he's as tedious
 As a tired horse, a railing wife
 Worse than a smoky house—

All these seem to be the poet's experiences of Anne Hathaway's cottage, which is still shown to the pious pilgrim, but now somewhat fixed up with a stove for visitors. Then this fragrant wafture from the old kitchen he has sent reeking down time:

I had rather live
 With cheese and garlic in a wind-mill, far—

on which well-scented foods he was regaled to a surfeit at that simple farmer's table. Shakespeare's nose seems to have been the most responsive and critical part of his total organism. He was a grand connoisseur of all sorts of smells; especially the breath of the working common people, laden with the odor of garlic and onions, was as unendurable to him as to the son of Roman Volumnia. Still we may wonder how he could tolerate the stench of that garbage heap, which lay under his window at his elegant mansion known as New Place, on account of whose unsanitary condition the poet's most searching and re-searching biographer (Halliwell-Phillips), thinks he took disease and died.

But there was one person in this unfriendly environment of Stratford who sympathized with Shakespeare and all his troubles, and supported him in all his aspirations—that was Volumnia the mother of our Stratford Coriolanus, who, “poor hen, has clucked thee safely home” from the wars external and also internal, for he had his inner battle as well as his outer conflict with his crushing circumstances. So he fails not to erect her lasting monument in a play which he must long have meditated while reading his Plutarch, but which he probably finished shortly after her death in 1608. And doubtless he could read a good deal of himself into the defiant Coriolanus, for he was a creative, yea self-creative reader of books. Also he could not help often recalling his mood when he first took flight from uncongenial Stratford.

It is, accordingly, our conception that Shakespeare had been ready to take his departure for some time when a particular event put speed into his lingering footsteps. This was the famous episode of his deer-stealing, which is said to have occurred in the park of Sir Thomas Lucy near Stratford. The first biographer of Shakespeare, Nicholas Rowe, writing in 1709, that is, a century and a quarter after the event, is our prime voucher for the fact, declaring that the young law-breaker “was prosecuted by that gentleman, somewhat too severely as he thought,” so that the poetic culprit “made a ballad upon him . . . which is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the

prosecution against him," and caused his sudden flight to London. Moreover Rowe affirms that the said ballad, though it be lost, was "probably the first essay of his poetry." Impossible! Shakespeare was then twenty-one years old, and the young genius full of creative energy had babbled his rhymes, and thrown off his ballads and verses from his early boyhood. Indeed it is our opinion that he carried to London in his head, and possibly in his pocket or knapsack, a number of poetic essays and fragments which he will use in his later works.

In fact this very experience with Sir Thomas Lucy he directly employs in two of his more mature plays. The first scene of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a burlesque on the poet's trial, in which Justice Shallow stands for Sir Thomas Lucy, and for the offender, who is Shakespeare, is substituted Sir John Falstaff, against whom Shallow makes the charge: "You have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge." Indeed Windsor is disguised Stratford, and here is located "in the county of Gloster." Also in the *Second Part of Henry IV* Shakespeare has introduced the same Justice Shallow as the object of Falstaff's contempt. Thus the poet did not forget to satirize Sir Thomas Lucy a dozen years after the case of deer-stealing in allusions which may still be an echo of the real occurrences and even of the old ballad.

Still all such grounds of accounting for Shake-

spere's flight to London from Stratford are relatively external; the deepest necessity for this step lay in the push of his genius. He knew that he must change his environment sooner or later. The domestic situation might prod his resolution, and the legal embroilment might fix the very day or minute; still the ultimate motive came not from without but from within. He must have had some dim forefeeling of what he had to do in this world, and have been waiting for the right conjuncture. A mature man of twenty-one he knew what he wanted and where lay his future; he had repeatedly seen the theater and tried poetry; he was already stage-struck and verse-struck, and perchance somewhat city-struck. With the deepest all-impelling equipment of destiny forth he marches toward his goal.

And now can we bring before ourselves the mood of the young traveler, probably pedestrian, as he turns down the road toward London, and, defeated seemingly in life, takes his last look across the Avon bridge at his receding home-town? Swaying between melancholy and hope, as his characters so often do, we may cite a little picture of him drawn in one of his Sonnets (No. 29), which, whenever written, can be taken as a kind of confession suggestive at least of his present mental state in its oscillation between the gloom and the exaltation of genius:

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
 And look upon myself and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him, like him with friends
 possessed,
 Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least;—
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising
 Haply I think on thee,—and then my state
 Like to the lark at break of day arising,
 From sullen earth sings hymns at
 heaven's gate—

Be it the Muse, or some man or some woman, who here slides into his soul with "Haply I think of thee", the result is the same; up and down the gamut of pain and pleasure he fleets, internally and externally teetering along the road to London town.

VII.

THE AGE.

Having cast a glimpse inwardly at the young man taking a resolute new plunge into the future's ocean, we may next scan outwardly the trend of the age into which he is now driving, and of which he is to make himself the greatest and most lasting spokesman. This year 1585 had seen Elizabeth enthroned in England for a quarter of a century and more; the Reformation had been fairly stabilized both in the law of the land and in the hearts

of the people; the religious separation from Rome had become complete and final. Then the political antagonism between the Latin world and the Anglo-Saxon was rapidly coming to a head and was nearly ready to break out into open war. Latin Spain, when Shakespeare was sauntering along the highway toward London, had about finished her huge fleet blazoned by her as the Armada Invincible, whose far-heralded object was the dethronement of Queen Elizabeth and the subjugation of that Northern upstart England to the Mediterranean Church and State. Thus the grand world-historical collision between the old and the new civilisation, or between Teutonia and Roma (or rather Romania) in its most recent form, was soon to be fought out afresh first on the sea, and then perchance on the land.

All Britain seethed in a ferment of which the center was the capital city, whitherwards our young poet had now turned his look and his thought. As he approached the heart of the maelstrom, he could not help feeling the time's mighty pulsation, and giving to it some utterance after his way, nuances of which we may still trace in his earlier dramas on English History with their distinctive national attunement.

And here let us set down an opposite fact by way of contrast, a light-point of reconciliation amid this dark time of venomous conflict between Northern and Southern Europe. Our youthful poet bore in his soul on his journey to London the love of the

Classical Renaissance, especially that which had been taking place in Italy during his century and the previous one; that revival of ancient learning it was which had spread over Europe and had penetrated even to little Stratford, in whose school the lad Shakespeare had drunk deeply and lastingly of antique Latin culture, as we have already seen. This Classical discipline, which unites his spirit so intimately with the South, he will never forget, but will cherish it and use it to the end of his career. We shall often have occasion to note with what affection and skill he conjoins and conciliates those two fighting cultures, the Germanic and the Latin, in his works, especially in his comedies. From this point of view we are to conceive Shakespeare, within his special field, which is the literary, as the great reconciler of the centuries-long European feud between Germania and Romania, who have just yesterday (1918) concluded their latest but bloodiest and most destructive warfare stretching nearly around the globe. Hence if the new healing word of our time be reconciliation of these two furious antagonists for all future ages, the sovereign English poet has already uttered it in his art, and to us imparts it through the training of his writ.

But coming back to Shakespeare's own date, we find that he is now thrust, headforemost as it were, into the two grand strifes of his people and of the Elizabethan era, the political and the religious, which scission cleaves Europe into two hostile

halves both in Church and in State. Of this scission he will show a few discordant traces. On the other hand out of the supreme European dualism he builds in his spirit's domain his all-subduing harmony, poetical and cultural, whose concords just now perchance thrill sweeter than ever to the peace-hoping soul of the time.

In Shakespeare's age England had already become too small for England. She had begun to feel herself prisoned in the tight walls of her tight little island home, and she was furiously wrestling within herself to burst through her sea-limits into a free new world. The Wars of the Roses had been fought to a close, and had largely purified her of her internal discords so that she could turn her united strength outward, beginning that globe-mastery which has kept widening out farther and farther down to the present moment, the recent war (1918) having shaken into her capacious lap vaster possessions than ever before, and also confirmed her naval supremacy.

This bound-bursting spirit of the Elizabethan era, which our poet profoundly felt and appropriated, and which gave to him the sovereign bent of his genius, may here be noted in two of its chief manifestations. The first is England's leap from her confining shores into the wide Ocean which had hitherto walled her in comparatively, so that she turned her most defiant limit into the helpful stepping-stone to her new marine world-character and its supremacy. She became mankind's chief

seaman, and enacted the grand symbolic deed of her young career in the circumnavigation of the globe through her sovereign sailor Sir Francis Drake, whom Shakespeare might well have seen and even could have known. For Drake's globe-rounding ship (The Golden Hind) after its return lay anchored in the Thames for several years as a kind of prophetic oracle, and was visited by vast crowds, and even by Queen Elizabeth in person, who with royal ceremony on its deck presented to its earth-girdling Captain his titled dignity of knighthood. There is little doubt that the poet's famed and far-visionsed utterance (in *Midsummer Night's Dream*) took its first ideal suggestion from Drake's real circumterrestrial deed, at whose uplifting view the rapt Shakespearian spirit, masked as little winged Puck, not so much tells as foretells: "I'll put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes." Drake's space-voyage was fulfilled in some three years, but Shakespeare's (or Puck's) time-voyage seems just now to be fulfilling itself, after the lapse of three centuries and more, in telegraph and telephone. We may well hold, with Elze for instance, that Shakespeare trod the deck of this wonder-ship of Drake, and felt the real fact propelling his imagination to its farthest reaches. For we have already marked how the poet takes the solidest reality as the substructure to his loftiest poetic temple, and how he needs the actual experience of the fact, out of which he is to rise to his ideal creation. From this point of view

the *Tempest* may be conceived as an idealized drama of English navigation, and the poet finally reveals himself as the prophet of his people. Indeed nothing can be more natural than that young Shakespeare was himself a sailor for a while during the crest of the excitement over the approaching Armada. Of course he would enlist on the spot to meet the moment, and then drop back into civil life when the crisis was over. Or if he did not enlist he was like to be seized by the King's press.

Another manifestation of England's bound-bursting spirit during Shakespeare's younger days was her attempt to colonize the new world overseas. The year before he set out for London, Sir Walter Raleigh had sent an expedition which discovered and named Virginia, though the first successful settlement was made more than two decades later (in 1607) at Jamestown. Thus England's persistent struggle to colonize herself, that is, to recreate herself in new communities and new states on a new continent, pulsed through the some twenty most active and creative years of Shakespeare's life. Wherein we may glimpse a deep correspondence between the poet's own spirit and that of his country, both being so mightily reproductive of themselves in their best. For England's political institutions, truly her greatest and worthiest achievement, were being reproduced in young fresh forms, and transmitted to the rising futurity. It was indeed her New Birth, her institutional Renaissance, of which her greatest poet drank at its

first upgush out of the folk-soul, and which he transmuted into its noblest wording, into its truly universal utterance, so that we are reading him now with an ever-renewing delight and instruction, from the Atlantic across the Continent to the Pacific.

Nor should we ever let lapse from our mind, while dwelling upon this institutional Renaissance whose progeny is largely the free states and peoples of North America, the cotemporaneous cultural Renaissance, the fresh genesis of the old Mediterranean civilization and its expression in art and literature, which came to Shakespeare and to England chiefly through Italy. In fact these two grand Renaissances of Shakespeare's time are ultimately one, being one mighty upburst of the Genius of the Age, or if you like better, one colossal downpour of the World-Spirit through two channels welling over into the garden of human culture, which it causes to bloom afresh in another new world-inflorescence.

Still there was an element of perennial conflict in both these manifestations of the Elizabethan era, for both its navigating and colonizing onsets over the seas collided with the claims of Spain. When the English navigators sailed out into the free Ocean, they were already encroaching upon what the Spaniard had seized and pre-empted as his own, just his watery Main. And the first English settlers at Jamestown, or even at Plymouth, were regarded as trespassers by Spain and

also by Rome, whose papal authority had conferred the right of possessing the New World upon Latin peoples. From this point of view the history of Anglo-Saxon America is the record of a continual transgression and defiance of the Latin-Spanish right of tenure. Thus that old Elizabethan Armada battle was a germinal conflict reproducing itself through the centuries till just now, and it seems not yet over. For is not the forward-pushing limit-surmounting Anglo-Saxon (so we may label him) to-day facing the Spanish heir along the Rio Grande boundary, with frequent clashes and mutual reprisals? It looks as if the Armada duel, after more than three hundred years of fighting, has not yet fought itself out to a finish. Our interest here is to note that Shakespeare, now the far-echoing voice of Anglo-Saxondom, was present at and shared in the very birth-throes of this long political and cultural struggle, and shows in his writ many traces of such an epochal experience of his country and of himself, especially in his English Histories.

And still another phase of this many-sided genetic age we must remark here: the inner moral upheaval and renovation of the English soul through Puritanism. This movement was already in its first early tidal sweep when Shakespeare reached out for London. He, as the universal child of his time, could not help sharing deeply in the grand national revival of conscience, which was the chief Puritanic mission, also a great Renaissance.

His supposed hostile attitude toward Puritanism must be revised and corrected in the light of his own statements, being largely a mistaken inference of modern critics. We shall find him in his earliest plays already turning over the problem of conscience, which becomes the all-dominating question in Hamlet, whose fate lurks in the clash of its colliding sides.

Still another mighty upburst of the Elizabethan era must be here glanced at: its gigantic push for self-expression. This tendency took a number of forms, which need not here be recounted, except the one which culminates in Shakespeare, namely the drama. The soul of the Age turned dramatic in utterance; the World-Spirit then spoke English, and took to making plays for his own highest self-revelation. Never before but once in the course of European History has the drama risen to be the supreme vehicle of the time's loftiest message; that was long ago in antique Athens after her heroic deeds in the Persian War. Often the query about the Elizabethan era haunts us: why was it that just then, for once and for all, during not more than forty or fifty years, the English mind, the national consciousness itself spoke dramatically in its supreme inspiration, and has never been able to do so again, in spite of desperate attempts at revivals. The Genius of History seems for a few years to turn dramatist through Shakespeare, whose far inferior fellow-playwrights often catch unique whiffs of the same supernal effluence.

Whatever be the answer, we find our best reward in taking up and communing with these highest moments of the age's best spirits, who can bring us to share in a mightily creative epoch. It was a world-bearing crisis, springing up at the confluence of the two great streams of Europe's two civilizations; one was the moral and religious Renaissance rising out of Germany and the North, the other was the cultural and literary Renaissance rising out of Italy and the South. Then both came together and married and created their greatest offspring in Elizabethan England, which furnished the third element, the English institutional life and spirit.

Into the throbbing center of such a creative period young Shakespeare plunged when he quit his Stratford home for the nation's capital. Very temperamentally he was at first dazed by the mighty phenomenon, and had to take his voyage of self-discovery.

VIII.

DRIFTING.

Here we come upon another intervening tract of years in Shakespeare's life which is a blank as far as documents are concerned. The interval between his setting out from home in 1585, and his getting anchored in his theatrical vocation about 1588—that stretch of inquisitive young-manhood from twenty-one to twenty-four—must have been very full and buoyant in acquiring a multifarious

personal experience of the city, of the nation, and indeed of the world, for London had already become the great world-city of Northern Europe, with a large foreign population. Some of these strangers Shakespeare has drawn from life, like the French Doctor Caius, and the Spanish Don Armado, both of them grotesques speaking English. Of course his dramas luxuriate in Italian characters, of whom many are simply Englishmen with Italian names. For Italy was then the veritable Holy Land of the age's culture, to which all Europe made pilgrimages, not excepting Shakespeare himself, ideally, and also really we think.

Hence we insert at this point what may be called the poet's drifting Triennium, a time of unanchored, miscellaneous, far-ranging but very eager and busy acquisition, in which he saw not only the day-side of the great metropolis, but likewise its night-life, whereof nearly every play of his furnishes some first-hand glimpses, if we peep under its mask just a little. Shakespeare's business now is to test all the upbubbling opportunities along his path; he peers down into every vista of the future as it shifts under his eye; in such a penetrating search we conceive him trying to find himself and to hear his true call in life.

It is not known exactly when Shakespeare reached London, nor by what means—afoot, on horseback, or by wheeled vehicle. Nor is it settled how long he loitered on the way or what deflections he may have made from the main path. Report runs that

he was a soldier for a while, and it seems likely that he had some military experience during these stirring times when all England was drilling to meet the Spanish Armada. Moreover in the Historical Plays especially he shows acquaintance with "the right form of war", which could be drawn only from experience. His knowledge of navigation has been recognized by expert seamen. Indeed he, being a young fellow just of the right age, could hardly escape service of some sort, as a soldier or sailor or indeed both. Another report makes him a country schoolmaster who scattered his light in dark places along his leisurely journey to the capital. Thus he may have enacted his own pedagogue Pinch, possibly named from the pinch of necessity, still to-day not unknown to that class of wage-earners.

At last, however, he gets to London, or possibly he pushes to that center at once, and thence scatters himself. Trudging along the Uxbridge road we conceive him in some excitement at the view, and also in some anxiety about the future, as he enters the archway of Newgate into the capital city then containing rather more than 100,000 inhabitants, according to trustworthy reckoners. Again report has busied itself with the question: to what occupation did he first set hand? Some say he was clerk for a while to an attorney, in which employment was learned his knowledge of the law. Not a necessary supposition, for Shakespeare all his life from youth up lived in the midst

of litigation, his father's, his own, and his town's—Stratford, indeed, bore the name of being a litigious community. For that matter, the Anglo-Saxon people everywhere are on the whole lawsuit-loving and also legal-minded—which they have to be in order to work their free institutions. Shakespeare undoubtedly reflects this general characteristic of his folk, but hardly more; indeed we are warned by lynx-eyed lawyers that there is a good measure of bad law in Shakespeare, who certainly did not expect in his hearers the legal precision of the Lord Chancellor.

It may well be supposed that the Stratford newcomer first hunted up some of his fellow-townsmen who were located in London. One of these was Richard Field, a successful printer, whose father was a neighbor of the Shakespeare family at Stratford. Friendly relations were now established between the sons, as is shown by the fact that Field afterwards printed Shakespeare's two poems, *Venus and Adonis* (in 1593), and *Lucrece* (in 1594). It is likely that Shakespeare, being taskless, may have done some odd jobs about the printing office, and observed and possibly practised some of the processes of typography, of which he shows traces of knowledge in his plays. But it never could have been with him a serious occupation; the urge of his genius would not let him stay long from his true life-calling. Accordingly we have to imagine him as seizing the first least chance he had of getting his grip on the stage, which is now becoming

England's highest self-expression, and also his own.

With good reason, therefore, tradition sends him to the theater, yea down to the very bottom of the theatrical ladder, as if to make the more vivid his rise to the topmost sovereignty of his vocation. From Sir William D'Avenant, Shakespeare's god-son, also rumored to be of still nearer sonship, is derived the report that the dramatist's first work at the play-house was "the taking care of the gentlemen's horses who came to the play", and that he organized a guild of horse-holders known as "Shakespeare's boys". But he could not stay outside long with his ability and his affability; soon he gets inside as "prompter's attendant" according to Malone. His next step was to become an actor on the stage, doubtless at first after a small way. Already in Stratford he could well have taken his little turn at private theatricals, perhaps then less uncommon than to-day. But now at London he had the chance not only to see the greatest histrionic genius of the age but also to unfold with him into his art—Richard Burbage, who was just rising to fame. The influence of Burbage was highly formative upon Shakespeare, who had to turn into grandeur of speech Burbage's grand possibilities of personation. The poet and the actor would naturally co-operate, to the advantage of both. Very famous was Burbage's representation of Richard the Third, but he probably reached his supreme histrionic fulfilment in the poet's tragic heroes—Hamlet, Lear, Othello. When Burbage

studied his great roles, we imagine Shakespeare often to have been present, pen in hand, jotting down new suggestive strokes to his text. Indeed one may well think that Burbage's fully developed genius is deeply stamped on Shakespeare's Second or Tragic Period.

But these years of drifting, aimless and anchorless, yet laden with their secret discipline and sore, must come to an end. Many a little gleam of this time and its peculiar psychology we may catch in the later works of the poet. In his first play (Comedy of Errors) we can often sense a passing flash of the bewildering scenes of a strange city. Antipholus of Syracuse straying around foreign Ephesus thus pictures his feeling of lostness:

I will go lose myself
 And wander up and down to view the city . .
 I to the world am like a drop of water
 That in the ocean seeks another drop,
 Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
 Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself

quite to the point of losing his self-identity. And later the same character will cry out: "And here we wander in illusions"—which is just the present raining of the poet.

Similarly we may overhear Shakespeare telling himself in a much later and maturer drama (Antony and Cleopatra) when the Roman hero speaks out with a thrill in his words:

And all alone
 To-night we'll wander through the streets
 and note
 The qualities of people.

Can we in this passage avoid imaging William Shakespeare, the arch man-builder in his ardent search for human material on the streets of London, in the very act of appropriating unto his future use "the qualities of people"?

Of course the great national or rather world-historical event of the Elizabethan era was the menace and the defeat of the Spanish Armada, over which the tense public excitement surged through this whole drifting Triennium of Shakespeare, and made him drift all the more. Such a prolonged, massive, overwhelming experience swaying him and all England from above as it were, caused him to mark well the pulse-beat of the World's History, and brought him into communion with the Spirit of the Age, which gave smiting evidence of its presence in the Armada victory. Many a throb of this epoch-begetting national deed we can feel recurring underneath his whole dramatic career. An early note of the triumphant outcome we may hear in the play of King John (III. 4.):

So by a roaring tempest on the flood
 A whole armado of connected sail
 Is scattered and disjoined from fellowship.

And in a passage written many years later we may

spy a reminiscence of England's desperate wrestle at the point of fate:

Your ships are not well manned;
Your mariners are muleters, reapers, people
Ingrossed by swift impress—

so warns Enobarbus, more like an Englishman than a Roman. Possibly Shakespeare himself had been nipped by the press-gang, to judge by his repeated unfriendly allusions. Even Falstaff, not very tender of conscience, can reproach himself: "I have misused the King's press damnably." And the following outburst (Third Henry VI. Act 2, sc. 5) may be taken as an early reminder of himself on the part of the poet:

Oh heavy times begetting such events!
From London by the King I was pressed
forth—

perchance just I, this William Shakespeare, a young fellow from the country strolling the streets of the capital, was drafted for the lowering crisis. Anyhow he saw the thing done, doubtless more than once.

IX.

ANCHORED.

Again we have to construe out of the hand-writing of the time an important occurrence or rather node in the Life-drama of the poet, which we can-

not find recorded in any other sort of script. This is the cessation of his epoch of drifting, when he stabilizes himself and settles down into his permanent vocation. During the year 1588, as nearly as we can make the date out, this pivotal transition was in the main accomplished, even if it had a before and an after. Behold him, then, wheeling into the highway of his great future, which seems to have the magic power of always growing greater with the lapse of the centuries.

What could have caused this new turn in the destiny of the man? I think that we can discern three co-inciding events which fell together into this year and lit upon William Shakespeare, leading him, hurtling him, or perchance gently caressing him into his future career. These three events we shall set down in a brief jotting.

1. It was in the year 1588 that the Armada made its Quixotic assault, was overwhelmed chiefly by the sea's windmills, and practically destroyed. When this long-lowering menace had cleared away, not only England, but Northern Europe, we may say Civilization itself felt a great release, a new freedom. Till that universal terror was removed, no Englishman dared deem his outlook settled for life. And how could William Shakespeare, still a young man, think of fixing himself in a new calling while that Spanish fate hung over him and his nation? Very rapid was the passing of the storm after it once broke; and though the King of Spain threatened England with fresh Armadas, they

never again caused serious anxiety. So we conceive that our poet, along with his people and age, received a grand liberation which enabled him to turn back to his own individual work in life, according to the bent of his genius. What was that work? For now he first felt himself free to run his own life-line.

2. The Elizabethan era had already begun to find its self-expression supremely in one form, the dramatic, as we have before emphasized. Now this was Shakespeare's native form of utterance, not yet developed, but lustily struggling to be born. Hence he found in the theatre of the time the congenial place for his evolution. A number of able but precluding dramatists had already broken the way, and with these he became intergrown, having formed an early personal acquaintance. Thus he breathed the very atmosphere of his age's germinal art, passing rapidly through its embryology to nascence and to maturity.

3. In this general dramatic upburst rises a great personality with his one greatest work of the period, which work appeared in its completeness this same year (1588). The mighty drama of *Tamburlane*—mighty in size, in speech, and in conception—was the theatrical wonder as well as the revolutionary document of the time, defiant of tradition in every direction, especially of that of the old stage. Here we behold Marlowe as the grand precursor and primal trainer of Shakespeare.

We may well suppose that the hitherto drifting genius became fully anchored inside the task of the theater when Marlow's *Tamburlane* had been presented in both its Parts. It thundered to him what he was to do with himself, evoking a response from his deepest consciousness. That epochal drama must have produced a creative impression upon Shakespeare, then twenty-four years old, as he watched its power over the audience, and also pondered its poetic text. It could not help giving an enormous impulse to his productive ambition. Doubtless he became acquainted with Marlowe himself, and they began to collaborate together. Such was the new and greatest training school of Shakespeare's apprenticeship—the genius of Christopher Marlowe, with whom he will remain for years, in fact till the latter's tragic taking off from life's own stage.

These were the two mighty personalities with whom Shakespeare came into living contact during the first four or five years of his London discipline—Burbage the actor and Marlowe the poet. Other writers doubtless influenced him, such as Kyd, Green, Lyly—all belonging to the new order and its dramatic expression.

Thus Shakespeare gets located in London, and has found his life's supreme vocation, being ready to take his first leap into his own living drama, or perhaps it was a slow transition. At this point we are enforced to look back and to survey his mental equipment, especially the intellectual material which he brought from Stratford.

First was the means for tapping the lore of the Renaissance, the age's great cultural movement. This, as we have seen, was what had been specially imparted to him in the Stratford School, and will weave through and tint poetically his whole dramatic career. It is clear that he kept up his study-habit, and never let his Latin drop from memory, adding to it some knowledge of two Romanic modern tongues, Italian and French. He knew and could employ Greek Mythology, especially in its Roman paramythical form, which he had found mainly in Ovid. Then his brain was a storehouse of popular legend, not gained from books so much as from hearsay and direct life; we may call it the Anglo-Saxon Mythus, which he employs in numerous ways, not only in passing allusion and illustration, but as an overworld of spirits, fairies, ghosts. We may whisper here that this mythical element is usually neglected by our worthy commentators, but Shakespeare's poetic personality cannot be fully grasped without it; he deeply partook of it, inside him it lay ever active and organic, and was not something on the outside, dragged in by sheer force for the sake of external ornament.

We must reaffirm our belief that he brought along not a few attempts at verse, poetic materials which he will draw upon often in the future. Recollect that he was twenty-one years old when he set out for London; it were impossible for a poetic genius to remain dormant during its springtime. Also many an experience of travel and of nature he

had gathered at Stratford, and will transmute into his coming dramatic expression; this personal experience is his true autobiography, not indeed separately set forth in its own shape, but disguised under its dramatic mask, which was the poet's native method of revealing himself. To be sure, this subtle self-revelation the reader must unmask and sleuth through all its devious windings and concealments, if he wishes to commune directly with the personality of the poet.

It should never quit the mind that Shakespeare's love of the Mythus was inborn, a constituent part of his nature, which always streams through his utterance in one form or other. Indeed Shakespeare himself has been called a Mythus, which statement about him is true enough if conceived in the right way. His total deed has an epical grandeur, and builds itself into one monumental poem of which he is the hero, and in whose expression he shows himself the voice of the Gods or of the Eternal Powers. Hence his biography, if it presents him truthfully and wholly, will not fail to interweave in its own right a mythical or imaginative element, as the very essence of the creative poet. But this must consciously tell what it is, unmasking its self-identity.

Here, then, we let the curtain fall upon the Prologue of the poet's Life-drama in which we have sought to set forth the main features of his early education and experience, till his flight from his confining life at little Stratford into the great

world of London, where he is fully to discover himself in and through his new dramatic vocation. Accordingly we are now to pass into the literal drama of this Life-drama of his, which is next to be witnessed unfolding out of its many separate constituents into a full-rounded entirety of human achievement. Here, then, closes our Prologue, for whose farewell words we may again cite the dramatist's own brief blazon of himself, proclaiming his art to be as universal as life itself:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.

Indeed he calls the world the "universal theatre" in the play (*As You Like It*) from which the foregoing extract is taken, intoning his pathetic words with the soulful music of consolation:

We are not all alone unhappy:
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
In which we play in.

The London Pan-drama

Preliminary Survey.

Thus we seek to unite into one comprehensive word with its corresponding thought all the plays of William Shakespeare, thirty six of them, in which his Life-drama completely dramatizes itself from start to fulfilment. An unusual word but much needed for clarity and completeness of comprehension is this Pan-drama, which is always to call up in the mind and to enforce Shakespeare's dramatic achievement as a whole, or the concept of all his dramas taken together. Moreover their production and representation belong to the one locality, London, and show the poet's evolution for nearly a quarter of a century.

I. Now this London Pan-drama has met with a stroke of exceeding good-luck: it was printed seven years after the poet's death in a single book known to all the world as the First Folio, whose date is

1623. Probably, if the question could be submitted to an election, this volume would receive more votes, choosing it the sovereign of greatest European books, than any other writing. Two actor-friends, John Heminge and Henry Condell, took charge of the work, and say of themselves in their dedication: "We have but collected them [the plays] and done an office to the dead;" whereupon these editors still more strongly stress the personal side: "without ambition either of self-profit or fame; only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare," have they done their labor of love. In such statements we catch an echo of Shakespeare's personality, as it influenced his nearest friends, and was held in memory and gratitude after his decease.

It is also worth while to note how these two editors, though actors by profession and theatre-owners, make their ultimate appeal not to the acted but to the read Shakespeare, as if they foresaw that the future of their poet lay with his vast reading multitude more than with his theatre-going constituency. Their exhortation still holds good of his book: "it is yours that read him." And their faith in his eternal portion seems proclaimed: "for his wit can no more lie hid, than it could be lost." They also emphasize that Shakespeare is not gotten with a single perusal: "read him, therefore; and again, and again." They also imply that he is not so easy, for if, after several trials, "you do not like

him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him." And what is stranger, they suggest even guidance in the study of him: "we leave you to other of his friends, whom if you need, can be your guides." A far-off hint, one may fancy, of our modern Shakespeare clubs, with their guides! Still the best way is that "you can lead yourselves, and others," for every reader must finally be his own interpreter. "And such readers we wish him," is their farewell word to their Book. And we believe that this is Shakespeare's own view of his whole work finally glimpsed from his retirement at Stratford.

From the drift of this prefatory address "To the great Variety of Readers", as it stands in front of the First Folio, we have the right to infer that the grand Shakespearian reading-army of the ages had already given evidence of itself in contrast with the theatre-going public. This is not saying that the histrionic side of Shakespeare is to be neglected; the drama is the art-form into which he pours his greatest, and, besides, has its own independent worth as well as right of existence. Still we are to note here that these professional actors of Shakespeare, who are also his intimate personal friends, recognize that the poet's deeper appeal is to the individual reader communing with himself and free of the attractions and distractions of the stage. That such was also the view of the poet himself, we shall find suggested in a number of his plays. Already Hamlet speaks of two Hamlets, the one

who is or may be staged, and the other who exists beyond the stage, the showable and the unshowable man, or the outer and the inner of him :

these indeed seem,
 For they are actions that a man might play ;
 But I have that within which passeth show,
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

So even the theatre-loving Hamlet declares that there is a something in him beyond the external representation. Still just that deeper internal Hamlet is what the Hamlet drama has to impart ultimately to its reader.

The appearance of this First Folio of collected Shakespeare was evidently regarded as a supreme literary event at the time. The Book revealing the total poet was hailed as a grand new epiphany of him, far more significant than any of his single dramas hitherto acted or printed. Prefixed to the First Folio is a little poetic fascicle of eight lines by a nameless bard who celebrates the Book as the dramatist's re-entrance after death into his new theatre, the immortal one :

We thought thee dead, but this thy
 printed worth,
 Tells thy spectators, that thou went'st
 but forth
 To enter with applause

in order to play thy eternal role. And the Elizabethan poet next in merit to Shakespeare, Ben

Jonson, lauds the Book in addressing its departed author:

My Shakespeare, rise!

Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy Book doth live,
And we have wits to read and praise to give.

Evidently Jonson, knowing the man well, saw him rise out of the grave to new life in his Book some seven years after his entombment. Still another cotemporary rhyme by Leonard Digges hymns us

. . . When that stone is rent,
And Time dissolves thy Stratford Monument,
Here we alive shall view thee still. This Book,
When brass and marble fade, shall make
thee look
Fresh to all Ages.

In such exaltation Shakespeare's friends and fellow-actors hail this First Folio as the poet's resurrection to life everlasting, and posterity has more than sealed their judgment not only with its approval but with a kind of consecration.

Another point suggested by these extracts we may not omit. This Book, gigantic as it is, must be finally won and realized by the reader as a whole of a human life, the completed self-expression of its author. While it gives the world in which he lives, it at the same time gives himself in his very selfhood; it is fundamentally biographical. In fact it will be read at last as an autobiography,

masking in its thousand characters one ultimate colossal personality, which it is our problem to unmask and to commune with as soul to soul.

From these as well as numerous other evidences, the inference seems co-ercive that the publication of the First Folio had its origin and its early preparation largely from Shakespeare himself. He must have long known the lasting value of his work, for it had been told him a thousand times by the best judges, and he must have started to collect and to edit his scattered and incomplete writings. What else was he doing at Stratford during his last four years of leisure, when he would naturally be looking backward and measuring his life's full span of achievements? Already he had experienced the enduring import of the typed book for keeping his work alive and ever creative. The Quarto editions of his plays never lapsed from print, though they were mostly "stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors", as they are branded by the indignant editors of the First Folio, Heminge and Condell. Here we may possibly catch an echo of Shakespeare's own reason for a new edition of his already published plays "cured and perfect of their limbs", which stolen and printed plays according to the usual tally amount to sixteen out of the thirty-six. Then the continued demand for his two early narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, which he had issued under his own name, must have strongly

impressed him with the need of printing his dramas also. Not a few writers try to show him altogether neglectful and loveless toward the children of his brain, though the noblest of their kind; but I refuse to believe him so indifferent to his own immortality, which he himself often celebrates in his loftiest prophetic vision (as in Sonnet 81):

Your monument shall be my gentle verse
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live—such virtue has my pen—
Where breath most breathes—e'en in the
mouths of men.

Now whosoever this sonneted *You* may be—woman, man, or possibly the poet's own Genius—it is Shakespeare's verse which imparts immortality to the mortal object, be this a he, she, or it, and his verse is evidently to endure through the printed page which eyes unborn "shall o'er-read."

At this point we should remember that the earlier poetic efforts of Shakespeare other than dramatic—quite a cluster of poems epical and lyrical—were not included in this First Folio, whose title-page announces only "Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, published according to the true original copies." Nor was this non-dramatic poetry of Shakespeare taken into the three later Folios; it was also omitted in the early editions. To Edmund Malone is assigned the credit of edit-

ing and printing the first complete edition of all Shakespeare's works in 1790, embracing both the plays and the poems. Such is the entire content of the poet's Book, as we see it everywhere to-day. Still the First Folio of 1623 is not only the main structure but the overarching dome of the whole Shakespearian edifice.

Another fact about this unique Book stirs all sorts of wonderings; for instance, twenty of his plays, some of them among his greatest, it printed for the first time. How was this precious literary treasure preserved and by whom? Did not all the theater's manuscripts perish when the Globe burned down very suddenly in 1612? Anyhow *Julius Caesar* was saved as well as *Antony and Cleopatra* and also *Macbeth*, along with seventeen others, if not from literal flames, at least from the fires of time, since every trace of the "original copies", which evidently lay before these first editors, has vanished. And it may be added that the dramas of one entire Period of the poet's life, five of them all together, were rescued from fate by the print of that First Folio. These are the later Shakespeare's works of reconciliation, the dramas of repentance and redemption, the so-called Romantic Tragi-comedies.

Enough for the present about this unique World-Book as we may signalize it, whose author the rare coteremporaneous Ben Jonson had already acclaimed as eternal, foretelling

He was not of an age, but for all time!

This First Folio has naturally given rise to much spinning of conjecture; it provokes in its very look all sorts of reflections, and even of fantasies. We seek to glimpse its environing conditions, and to follow out all the little rills of suggestion, which rise and stream through it and around it, and embosom it on every side. But especially in the center of this vast and intricate dramatic web, we search to behold the spiritual visage of the poet himself peering through, as it were from behind his thousandfold creations, which at times he seems to idealize as his own outflung shadows. Thus, when he interrogates himself (Sonnet 53) with deep yearning, he drives his reader to make the same quest of him:

What is your substance, whereof you are made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
And you but one, can every shadow lend.

II. Next comes the problem of putting into some kind of biographic order and organisation this Book, which as the one all-including Shakespearian Pan-drama, must have its own divisions and subdivisions, or its own acts and scenes, whose junctures are to reveal the movement and also the build of the poet's total Life-drama. Already the First Folio in its table of contents gives prominently its classification of itself into three main parts—Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies—under which heads are aranged all the plays (except one, seemingly by chance omitted). More-

over Shakespeare himself in his *Hamlet* makes allusion to the same division, which he has received from the aforetime—the dramatized History being peculiarly, though not exclusively, English, for it was already known to old Aeschylus. But such a classification pertains to the art-form and hence is essentially formal, giving no deeper clew to the relation of the separate plays to the poet's own evolution. In fact we shall find that the young Shakespeare in his early period wrote all three kinds of drama, comic, historic, tragic, and likewise made exploring incursions into several other poetic territories besides the dramatic.

Hence we shall have to employ a different method and a different nomenclature for our biographic purpose. We shall seek, first of all, to periodize the poet's life-work in full accord with its inner process and fulfilment. That is, the present Shakespearean Pan-drama falls into three great Periods of unfolding itself along with its poet, three inter-related phases of one total round of human achievement, which in a general way we may conceive as rise, culmination, and descent, or the morning, noontide and afternoon of his one great creative day of life. But such similes are only an outer brief scaffolding to help us construct the real building.

Now these three Periods of Shakespeare's productivity are not only very diverse in their contents, but also they differ much in the clearness of their scope and in the definiteness of their limits.

As we are now purposing to give in advance a mere forecasting sketch of these Periods, which is to be filled out later, we shall first take the one of the three which can be marked off most distinctly in its boundary lines. This is his Second or purely Tragic Period lasting from about 1600-1 till 1609, that is some eight or more, probably nine years. Out of his previous very diversified and much-scattered activity, not only in the drama but also in other kinds of poetry, he passes to his unified, homogeneous, concentrated Period (this Second one) in which not only his world-view, but his very consciousness turns mightily and undividedly tragic. It is rightly deemed the masterful culmination of his Genius, bringing forth his greatest writ, if not the greatest writ of all time hitherto; for now his previously discursive Pan-drama of many kinds gathers itself up into one all-burning focus and becomes his Titanic Pan-tragedy, as we may word it in its distinctive character. This Period overarches the poet's middle time of life, say from thirty-six to forty-five, doubtless the mightiest of all his years. Nine single tragedies we place here, first to be separately taken up and ordered, then finally to be conceived and organized as one supreme work, as the poet's one colossal Pan-tragedy of human existence.

So much for the Second Period. The next, in clarity and definiteness of its periodic outline, is, to our mind, the Third Period of Shakespeare's dramatic achievement. It covers but a few years, per-

haps only three or four, and may be regarded as closing with the poet's last dramatic composition, about 1612-13. But the tone, the mood, even the meter changes; the action ends not now in death but in soul-healing restoration. Moreover the poet shows a return to his First Period, dropping Tragedy and taking up again Comedy and even History, if we add his Henry VIII. And yet with a deep difference of the spirit. The pervasive thought is now that of repentance, reconciliation, redemption. Out of his tragic world the poet has unfolded into a mediatorial conception of life, and his Pan-dramatic evolution ends happily in a new reconciled species of play which may be suggestively named Tragi-comedy, hyphenating its two clashing elements as overcome and harmonized in mutual mediation. Thus the Life-drama of Shakespeare as a whole winds up peacefully as one vast finished drama of reconciliation, in which he shows himself harmonious with the world's regnant spirit and with himself.

Having thus indicated the drift of the Second and Third Periods, we come finally to the First, altogether the most copious, heterogeneous, and hence difficult to bring into any kind of transparent order. Thus it stands in striking contrast to the two later Periods of the poet as already outlined. Twenty-two plays lie here, seemingly a tangled mass of youth's dramatic luxuriance, the riotous outgrowth of poetic young-manhood reveling in its primal creative fertility, which ranges

in freedom from its twenty-fourth (or possibly earlier) year till its thirty-sixth. At the first glance it seems out of place to put so many dramas into the First Period and so few into the Second, against all the commentators by the way. But we must recollect that *Hamlet*, for instance, of the Second Period equals about three plays of the size of the *Comedy of Errors* of the First Period, and it probably cost the author thrice three times as much human experience as well as intellectual labor for its creation. Hence the poet's tragic Period may well exhibit his greatest and most intensive outlay both of body and of soul, of physical vigor as well as a psychical energy.

Thus we construe the London Pan-drama of Shakespeare, primarily emphasizing its three grand divisions, which we call Periods, each of which, has its own distinct character and movement as well as organisation, yet forms but one part or constituent of the total work. Here it is in place to re-state briefly for future guidance, and to set down the three cardinal Periods in their due order:

First Period—that of the young man overflowing with an exuberant creativity in divers directions, testing himself variously, learning and unfolding his art and himself, always striving and advancing toward his highest goal, that of complete self-realisation, but not yet quite getting there—so we may call the present Period from this point of view his *Apprenticeship*, that stage of the poet's evolution which comes before and leads up to **Master-**

ship. Moreover it is in the main a time of happy, easy, and exuberant productivity; the prevailing mood is that of Comedy, though with dark and even tragic streaks darting through it here and there. Hence this is essentially the poet's variable, miscellaneous Period, comic on the whole, in spite of manifold divagations on other lines.

Second Period—that of his middle life, and especially of his central and sovereign activity, his *Mastership*. Herein he shows himself in conflict with himself and with his world, quitting his previous diversity and concentrating upon one dramatic form, the tragic, and thus confining himself to the one highest domain of his art, Tragedy. Hence this is singly and without exception his Tragic Period, and the poet in spirit becomes as tragic as any of his characters, or perchance as all of them together. But he gets able to free himself of their fates by his remedial power of self-expression, and therein of self-realisation.

Third Period—that of his later years, in which there is a return out of his dark tragic depths to a sunnier view of life, to his deeply serious yet happy-ending Comedy; thus we may give it the compounded title of Tragi-comedy, with its repentance, reconciliation, redemption. Shorter in time and far less intense than the preceding Period, it nevertheless rounds out his life's cycle to its final spiritual fulfilment, as well as to its formal psychological completeness.

Thus we seek to mark down in advance the grand turns or the capital joints in the large and complicated organism of the London Pan-drama of Shakespeare. Only thus can we catch and commune with his vast and varying and ever evolving personality, as we witness the mighty movement of his soul realising itself fully in its native form, which is the dramatic. But underneath the dramatic form lurks ever the psychical, which is the deepest and most universal element of man and the world, and of which the drama is simply one mode of utterance through art. Moreover we may well put strong and repeated emphasis upon the present periodizing of the poet's life and work, since this field of Shakespearian exposition has been generally slighted, or radically misunderstood by our worthy expositors of Shakespeare.

And here we must not fail of the reflection that this completed Shakespeare, this one monumental Pan-drama of the poet has never been acted as an entirety, and is not likely to be so acted very soon, under present theatrical conditions. It has to be served us in little units or atoms, known as single plays, out of which the whole organism is built. Still the supreme object of Shakespearian study is to get acquainted with the entire spiritual structure of the man in his total achievement, and to contemplate him not alone in separate passages, characters and dramas, but in his complete organic realisation, builded not merely of parts independent outwardly, but of members interdependent

and intergrown inwardly to his one finished Life-drama.

Long ago it was said that a little extract or speech from *Hamlet* was no more able to give the idea of the play as a whole than a single brick could show the nature of the building of which it was a part. But the comparison should be carried up higher: the single play, even great *Hamlet*, is but one room, even if the most spacious of all, in the poet's world-edifice here called the London Pan-drama; and the best reader must endeavor as his ultimate aim not only to live in but to live the full Shakespearian commonwealth peopled with its thousand eternized characters.

Accordingly we have taken our first perch upon the very dome of this lofty dramatic structure, and thence have cast our preliminary outlook, where the view is clearest and simplest. Young Shakespeare, with head full of unwritten poetry and pocket full of written verses we have conceived as he set out from Stratford, and we have glimpsed him plucking the delicious fruit of his first London experience. But his true vocation now begins in earnest, and we are to thread his somewhat labyrinthine ascent to the summit of his Genius, where a new and different spectacle sweeps into vision.

FIRST PERIOD.

Apprenticeship.

During a dozen years or more Shakespeare was in training to reach his highest self-expression in the drama. Hence all this time he remained a kind of apprentice to his art, though a great one, perchance the greatest! So it comes that we now apply to him the term *Apprenticeship*, in order to indicate the unfinished poet as compared with himself at his topmost achievement, which he is to attain in the next Period. Not yet has he quite fulfilled himself, though we may consider him at times more interesting and more brilliant as a learner than as a graduate. This primary, grandly preparatory stage of the total London Pan-drama we inscribe as his First Period, which we date between the years 1588 and 1600, without insisting too pedantically upon the exact year fore or aft.

And since the poet during this Apprenticeship is ever the searcher and self-evolver, we shall endeavor to designate him by certain salient ad-

jectives, as we may catch a glimpse of him in his changeful development. He is now the versatile Protean Shakespeare, capable of many transformations; he shows himself the investigator, the tester, the experimentalist along various poetic lines, trying them all on his Genius, to see which fits best. Assimilative, too, we must mark him, creatively assimilative, not merely swallowing his lore in erudite masses. Also we may conceive this as his pre-tragic Period, in which the Tragedy is as yet implicit despite some prophetic upbursts.

Looking at the poet's literary output of this Period we find it very multiform, consisting of many species of composition. It is for him a time of vast and varied experiences of the world about him, and especially a time of putting his diversified life into art. His spirit delights in trying every poetic form as the vehicle of his deeper creations, particularly of his human characters, with which this Pan-drama of his overflows, as if it were a well-built city containing a ghostly but ever-living population, a veritable Shakespearopolis.

All educated people are now supposed to know Shakespeare's characters, at least the leading ones of his dramatic commonwealth. They are our familiar acquaintances, with whom we seem more intimately associated than with the famous personages of history. Already in the Public School our young folks obtain their unforgettable introduction to Julius Caesar the greatest Roman, to Hamlet the most famous Dane, to Portia who can

talk Latin, and to other ladies and gentlemen of old and new renown. These characters live for us more authoritatively than the Presidents of the United States, with perhaps two or three exceptions. The poet has made them immortal, as if he tapped the creative source of individuality itself, and turned it to flow into his new human mould. You may know the ideal Hamlet better than you know any breathing idealist, and there is probably more of him to be known. But we seek not merely to get acquainted with Shakespeare's created shapes, however masterful and multitudinous, but we also long to see the creator himself in his workshop creating or perchance re-creating immortal souls for his poetic commonwealth, and thus immortalizing himself in action as world-builder.

Another suggestion, though more intelligible later, should not be omitted here at the beginning: this Apprenticeship is a part of a greater whole, of a total life-sweep whose threefold process should be grasped if we are fully to understand any one of the poet's works. For he wrote each of them from his entire Self; he was at the start potentially all that he afterwards became in reality. What he is to be lies already fermenting in his early poems, and the interpretation should give at least a glimpse of the total Shakespeare in each part or drama. There lurks in every atom of the man the possibility of his whole career and of its process as fulfilled, which we are now seeking to envisage.

Accordingly we must next take up and put into some kind of order this long and complex Apprenticeship with its twenty-two plays and with its divers other poems. As already set forth, it embraces the First Period of the poet's London Pandrama, and divides itself into three distinctive Epochs, which we shall name (1) Collaboration, (2) Imitation, (3) Origination. We hope that in these titles the inquisitive reader may catch beforehand a little hint of the poet's inner movement toward his goal. It should be forewarned that these divisions both interlace and overlap, and hence cannot be rigidly fixed in annual limits. Still they mark the dominant tendencies or perchance the three larger successive surges up toward the crest of his Genius. This First Period also represents the poet's wrestle with tradition, which at the start he appropriates immediately, then imitates independently, and finally transfigures to originality.

CHAPTER FIRST.

COLLABORATION.

The primal act of Shakespeare's dramatic authorship was his partnership in play-making, whereby two or more were co-operant in one piece. He felt himself not yet ready to start on his own account and to compose an independent work; he became the young co-worker with others, who were his early practical teachers. Hence his first Epoch was one of Collaboration, in which he is learning, through the help of more experienced writers for the theater, to get hold of the transmitted dramatic form, to win stage-craft and to dramatize a theme for the public. This earliest enterprise of the poet has its one chief literary document in the historic trilogy of *Henry VI*, out of which *Richard III* unfolds imitatively. Hence the present Epoch brings before us the embryonic Shakespeare, the germinal dramatist in his first shape.

The time was dramatic; the sovereign Elizabeth was dramatic, especially in her conflict with Mary Queen of Scotland; the nation became a drama in its struggle with Spain, having a tragic outlook for a while yet with happy ending. This national round through tragedy back to peace we shall find to lurk in the poet's total Life-drama, hereafter to be explicitly set forth. There can be no doubt that the young poet, in this choice of his life's task, had

felt the deepest and mightiest literary pulse-beat of the age. It was just the English consciousness which turned dramatic and found its supreme expression in theatrical presentation. Some fifty dramatic poets have been counted in the fifty years of what may be called the Shakespearian age, and probably there were many more, lesser and least. The outburst was national, indeed it was more; it had, as we now see, an universal import.

These dramatists, wild and wayward on the whole, lived not the regular prescribed life of the community, but were in a state of protest, of defiance—a lawless lot, daring trespassers of the traditional order, spendthrifts, deep drinkers haunting the alehouse and the brothel. As the supreme type of this class, the young Titan Christopher Marlowe may be listed. Shakespeare was in the whirl, and experienced it thoroughly; still we have the right to say that it never controlled him, certainly he never let it submerge him, as it did quite all his malcontent fellow-poets headed by Marlowe. But he knew well through the reality the conflict between appetite and reason, between blood and judgment, or senses and spirit. Indeed the first clash of his poetical life-battle was the aspiring youth's ever-recurring collision of originality supposed or actual, against tradition.

England in the time of Shakespeare was realizing her supreme national endowment, her will-energy, and so she loved especially to behold herself in the deed. The drama presents man in

action. She had defeated the Armada and had asserted herself against the greatest power of Europe. Now the budding receptive poet, our young Shakespeare, has been whelmed into this upheaval of the nation at its very center, and starts to making himself its enduring voice both in form and substance.

At this national center, which is the city of London, there has been gathering and evolving the crude material for the new English drama; we may call it the dramatic protoplasm, out of which is to be shaped by the right artificer the coming Pan-drama of Anglo-Saxondom. Such is the primordial genetic point at which we shall seek to catch some glimpse of this new creation in the beginning, of which again we are to hearken the world-forming word, as here too "in the beginning was the word."

Thus we summon before us the incipient poet, the coming play-maker Shakespeare limned in a rather dreamy dawn-light, as collaborator, working in intimate, quite indistinguishable conjunction with his fellow-dramatists, he being not yet fully individualized in his product or in himself. His personality glints out here and there in fitful flashes, and then it seems to drop back absorbed into the time's primordial mass without distinctive outline. So let us watch during a little moment for the sake of the future, the embryonic Shakespeare swimming in his protoplasmic sea, and then sinking in it for a spell till he rise out of

it and receive the seal of his creative individuality stamped ineffaceably upon his separate works.

I.

Early Fellow-Dramatists.

Shakespeare, when he first dropped down upon London's dramatic territory, found it already pre-empted and cultivated by a band of intrepid forward-pushing pioneers, who had in their domain all the challenging dare-deviltry of the frontiersman. These became his primal teachers and exemplars, whose lesson he had to learn, embody in writ, and then transcend. It is now in place to give a brief record of this initial experience of the oncoming dramatist, for its influence stayed with him till his last penstroke. Here follow the names and the chief doings of these defiant world-stormers.

1. The first writer to be called up in this connection is the author of *Hieronymo* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, two sanguinary and thunderous plays, or rather one play in two parts usually assigned to Thomas Kyd, though with a question mark. Of the life of this man nothing definitely is known; even his date cannot be fixed, yet it must have been before Shakespeare's dramatic entrance in 1587-8, for till then Kyd's dramas and his spirit had dominated the London stage, when their supremacy was challenged by Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. And the name of Kyd yet lives as the

originator, or at least the best exponent of that dramatic species still to-day known and even popular as the blood-and-thunder Tragedy. But our interest now is to note that the young learner Shakespeare took up into himself this sort of Tragedy with an immortal sympathy, though he kept transforming and ennobling it in accord with his own inner life-long evolution. His *Titus Andronicus* is an early witness to Kyd's influence, though this play has been denied him against all valid evidence. It has likewise been supposed that Kyd wrote in his manner the first crude and bloody Hamlet Tragedy, which our poet got to know at this time, but after many years' brooding he elevated and transfigured it into its present dramatic sovereignty.

Also from Kyd's grandiosity of expression Shakespeare may have first caught somewhat of that Oceanic roll of human speech wherein he became the supreme master, even if he too sometimes swells over into turgidity like his prototype. Still such high-sounding magniloquence was a general urge of the time, and fails not of its appeal to-day.

2. More nearly co-temporaneous with Shakespeare than with Kyd were several dramatists who are usually grouped together — Greene, Peele, Nash and Lodge—to whom we may add Euphuistic Lyly and Titanic Marlowe. They were all University men, classically trained, and prided themselves upon their good education as well as their good blood with a kind of aristocratic dis-

dain—in which matters they showed quite a contrast to the more rural and less learned, but far more original Shakespeare. On the other hand they were a dissipated, reckless, usually moneyless set of Bohemians, with the exception of Lyly; they butted their heads against social tradition, and held aloof from Elizabeth's court, leading the life of gay lawless vagabonds, a right Falstaffian rabble of gifted literary bummers hanging around the taverns and underworldly purlieus of London.

It so happens that one of these maddened fellow-dramatists has handed down to us the first contemporary allusion to Shakespeare during the aforesaid early London years. This is Robert Greene, who has vented his anger and envy upon the newcomer and evidently victorious rival in the following jet of venom: "There is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers" (he has stolen our trade) "that with his *Tiger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide*" (adapted from Shakespeare's First Henry VI) "supposes he is as well able to bum-bast out a blank verse" (Marlowe's new dramatic meter) "as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*" (skillful both as writer and player, and possibly as manager) "is, in his own conceit, the only Shake-scene in a country." Here the evident allusion is to Shakespeare's name, noted source of much punning fertility. The book from which this passage is taken, Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, belongs to the year 1592, and very distinctly heralds that Shakespeare in a few years

had already won a commanding position in the theatrical world, outstripping his older fellow-dramatists. Especially his versatility (Johannes Factotum) is sneeringly emphasized, as well as his poetic power. Another fact we may rightly infer from his foe's bitter words: Shakespeare was well aware of his own transcendent ability, and probably would not fail to show his "conceit" if prodded a little. Doubtless the poet had already come to a consciousness of his own Genius, as compared with his co-temporary craftsmen. These now unappreciated talents Greene advises to quit their old business and to withhold "your admired inventions, for it is pity men of such wits should be subject to the pleasures of such rude grooms." Yet with some of these writers Shakespeare is supposed to have collaborated in his Henry VI. But the foregoing extract would seem to indicate that he had already risen out of that former phase of his dramatic evolution.

Another glimpse of Shakespeare at this date is furnished by the play writer Henry Chettle who had published Greene's vicious attack. Only a few months later (December 1592) Chettle, in his *Kind Hartes Dream*, printed a very obsequious apology, evidently in response to the protests of the poet's friends: "I am as sorry as if the original fault had been mine because myself have seen his (Shakespeare's) demeanor", which the apologist declares publicly to be "civil", duly acknowledging at the same time his excellence "in the

quality he professes", which doubtless alludes to Shakespeare's profession of actor. Moreover "divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing" or his business honesty, as well as "his facetious grace in writing, which approves his art"—a praise which seems to mark the success of Shakespeare's comic Muse up to 1592-3. From these scattered strokes we catch a very favorable though sketchy picture of Shakespeare as gentleman, business man, player, and writer, prosperous and even distinguished at the age of twenty-eight. It is the earliest of many tributes to his winning personality, of which we shall hereafter catch repeated echoes.

3. In this group of dissolute defiers of law, human and divine, the central figure rises up in the towering Titan, Christopher Marlowe, often called the founder of English Tragedy, which he not only wrote but tragically lived. Shakespeare knew him, probably collaborated with him, but certainly imitated him, and for years kept assimilating not only his outward manner but his creative Genius. As we construe the relation between these twin poetic grandeurs, Shakespeare's prime task in his early Apprenticeship was to take up into himself and make his own the work and life of Marlowe, and then to transcend his master in both. Really the Shakespearian Pandora shows its Marlowese contribution not only at the start but at the finish. Already we have remarked several times this colossal figure sweep-

ing into young Shakespeare's horizon, and looming up as it were gigantically out of a primitive fog-world—and still more of him is to come.

4. We have taken a short look at the English nation tossing in the throes of a new epoch which finds its unrestful, explosive utterance in the drama of the time. Some parallels may be cited. For in like manner ancient Greece, at the beginning of her great dramatic evolution, showed a volcanic energy of conception and expression, as we may still see exemplified in her old poet Aeschylus. His Prometheus remains the primeval Titanic prototype of the divine Genius in revolt against the upper powers of Law and Institution, which through their supreme representative, Olympian Zeus, chained him in adamantine fetters to the inaccessible peak of Mount Caucasus. There he has to suffer for his defiance of the existing order, being branded as godless and a rebel, whose penalty is to feel the vulture ever clawing and gnawing his vitals. In a number of strokes Prometheus forecasts a picture of Marlowe, who was in his life's outcome more tragic than any of his tragedies; indeed he was just their tragically fated hero. Aeschylus preludes his drama with the pitiless work of two elemental powers, Strength (*Kratos*) and Violence (*Bia*), whose nature may be heard resonant both in his thought and in his style, as well as in those of Marlowe, through whom Shakespeare was first made to feel "the right Promethean fire."

More than a century ago arose a similar literary epoch of Titanic upheaval and protest against the established world, which broke loose in Germany whereof the central figure was the young Goethe. It was known as the time of Storm and Stress (*Sturm und Drang*), heralding the first struggles and birth of the new German literature. Goethe studied both Aeschylus and Marlowe, and essayed to reproduce each of them in their masterpieces of defiance. So we read that he, during his supremely creative period, planned and in part, executed a new Prometheus; also he pored over Marlowe's Faustus, which he once thought of translating into German, and whose suggestive theme finally became his greatest work, his veritable life-poem. Goethe like Shakespeare passed through and then transcended this stage of furious mental and social revolt, attaining to a reconciliation with the providential world-order, wherein he makes complete the spiritual cycle of his career. German critics have not failed to parallel their Goethe-Schiller Storm and Stress, with the corresponding phenomenon in the Marlowe-Shakespeare evolution, though the two events and their poets show also a very distinctive unlikeness, as mirroring two different peoples and ages.

And here it would be a serious lapse in us not to record that our American Literature has shown and still shows striking prognostics of a similar stormful and stressful crisis in its development. Truly we are now living in a time of general liter-

ary revolt against old traditions. We can to-day in our land catch glimpses of those ancient Greek, Aeschylean god-hammerers, Strength and Violence; again we can hear many a blast of the Goethean Storm and Stress roaring through the printed page; we may even see Elizabethan Marlowe once more rattling and writhing against his social and literary chains with a Titan's might and fate. Is not our Walt Whitman the modern twin-brother of Kit Marlowe, though so different in lore, in metrical music and in dramatic gift? Whitman towers up our foresent American Titan striving gigantically to get the ultimate poetic form for himself and his message. But for some reason or other our spiritual brain-storm and its cyclonic discipline have not yet given birth to an Aeschylus, or a Goethe, or a Shakespeare, or perchance a Marlowe. Is he yet to be shaped and to rise out of the present literary chaos of our well-leveled democratic mediocrity?

Here we shall have to allow the interrogation mark to stand till all-erasing Time perchance scratch it out with his hour-glass. Meantime let us hurry on to the next landing-place for our poet.

II.

Henry VI.

The cluster of plays, five of them all told, which gather around the name and the career of Henry VI, constitute the heart and nearly the whole of

the Collaborative Epoch of Shakespeare. This we are now to regard not merely as a single fact, or an isolated work of the poet, but as an epochal stage of his life's unfolding toward its fulfilment. Moreover it is to be considered as the first form or the early substructure of his completed edifice, which we have called his Pan-drama. The leading characteristic of this time is that the poet has hardly yet individualized himself, being still interfused with or absorbed in his co-laborers, even if we may often glimpse his striving personality trying to free itself into its own distinctive utterance.

Henry VI, English King of the House of Lancaster, throned already during his infancy, is dated 1422-1471, whose reign lasted therefore, nearly half a century. The ruler of a turbulent land, he, starting as a baby, never rightly got over his babyhood; he never could shed his swaddling clothes or escape from his leading strings, which everybody about him, man and especially woman, seemed trying to grasp, and thus become the real sovereign of England. A creative time of king-masters and even king-makers it was, who never forgot that if they could only make themselves king-makers, they would be all the king—and more.

Five plays, we say, form the group which the Shakespearian student has to take into his reckoning under the title of *Henry VI*. These five fall into two distinct series, the canonical and

the uncanonical, each being thus measured by the authorized canon of the Folio of 1623. For only three of these plays, superscribed as the First, Second, and Third Parts of *Henry VI*, were printed by the first editors, Heminge and Condell, not only with Shakespeare's consent, but, as we believe, in obedience to his directions. The other two plays, however, being thus excluded from the Shakespearian canon, may be deemed apocryphal, though they are intimately related on a number of points with the accepted text just mentioned. In fact, these two apocryphal dramas are seen to be, upon a little inspection, the early forms or the less mature redactions of the two canonical dramas, the Second and Third Parts of *Henry VI*. So the First Part of *Henry VI* stands alone, without any such apocryphal back-ground, though it ought to be classed with the same on account of its unripeness and general inferiority, according to the view of some critics. Still this view is not without its frowning interrogation mark.

These two uncanonical plays were first printed as separate Quartos in 1594 and 1595 respectively, that is, more than twenty years before the death of Shakespeare. They give no name of their author in the first edition, which comes early in the career of the poet. But a much later edition (1619), hence after his death, prints both plays together, as "newly corrected and enlarged", and also adds "written by William Shakespeare, Gent." Here is an indication at least that the poet's name

on the title-page gave luck to the saleability of a printed book. Also the reading popularity of these dramas is betokened by the repeated editions.

The names of these two uncanonical plays must next be noted, for the sake of our collaborative Shakespeare. The title pages of both are quite long, being in each case a kind of descriptive preface, most of which we shall have to omit. The earlier runs thus: "The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster," which is followed by a kind of Table of Contents. Worthy of notice is the fact that this drama here asserts itself to be "the First Part," which seems to indicate that the canonical "First Part of Henry VI" already mentioned, had not yet appeared. This title is still too cumbersome, so we shall abbreviate it, with most commentators, simply calling it "The Contention." The title-page of the second uncanonical drama starts thus: "The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York", to which are appended numerous other happenings: all of which may be abridged simply into "The True Tragedy". Let so much be said in the way of some tedious but needful preparation, here cut as short as possible. And let it again be noted that the above "Contention" corresponds to the "Second Part of Henry VI", and the "True Tragedy" to the "Third Part of Henry VI."

At this point opens the long and complicated

interplay, or we may call it a battle waged by critics and editors over these two sets of dramas, the canonical and the uncanonical. The issue turns chiefly upon the assignment of authorship, in regard to which three attitudes may be taken: (1) both sets of plays are by Shakespeare, a view specially championed by the English editor Knight and by many of the German critics: thus the uncanonical set are merely old and incomplete drafts which Shakespeare completed in his canonical set; (2) neither set is by Shakespeare in any responsible sense, even if he may have added here and there some touches; (3) both sets are partially by Shakespeare and partially by other authors (Peele, Greene, Nash, Lodge, Marlowe), or probably these may be reduced to one (Marlowe). Here then dawns the very large though misty realm of collaboration in Shakespearian exegesis, with its thousandfold conjectures shooting out every whitherward. The chief difficulty of this realm is that it is almost entirely subjective, with little or no anchorage on reality, being sprung variously of the critic's own mood, taste, temper, talent. Quite resultless the sport seems except as a curious literary amusement; it keeps up successive shakings of the brain's kaleidoscope, and thus makes new combinations of colors through the shifting bits of fantasticalities. Such is one of the modern Shakespearian diversions, doubtless never intended by the poet.

Still there is in this field one objective, well

documented fact, which must be fully validated: each set of plays can be shown mutually interrelated by actual mathematics. For instance, *The Second Part of Henry VI* has some 520 lines which are also found in *The Contention*; thus they are joined together into a common organism. In like manner *The Third Part of Henry VI* and *The True Tragedy* are interlinked in about 1010 lines, which are just the same in both plays. Thus each set of the two plays, the canonical and the uncanonical, intertwine in their dramatic bodies, and are found already wrought together, or collaborated. Moreover each canonical play shows many altered lines, that is, lines which are made up of words belonging in part to both the old and the new pieces. Thus the intergrown twins seem to be gradually growing apart in some of their members. These altered or hybrid lines run to more than 800 for each set. Finally each new or canonical drama has its own separate complement of altogether new lines, of which there is no trace in the corresponding uncanonical drama. That is, the canonical *Second Part of Henry VI* has 1715 entirely new lines, and the canonical *Third Part of Henry VI* has 1021 entirely new lines.

So this double set of dramas may be compared to the Siamese twins, whose organism shows three stages moving from unity to separation: first, they are in one portion completely united; secondly, in another portion they become partly separated and partly united; then in a third portion they

branch off completely separated. Yet all these stages or portions form the one totality called *Henry VI*.

Now in this entire work of *Henry VI*, we find two all-dominating collaborators, Shakespeare and Marlowe, and the whole reveals a picture of their collaboration. Both these poets are of the same age, having been born the same year (1564); yet Marlowe has matured far more rapidly than Shakespeare, and thus becomes for a while the latter's guide and exemplar who determines him, at first quite absorbing him, till he learns and fully assimilates the lesson and indeed the genius of his teacher. Then he sets up for himself and composes his own independent drama. For, as I read Shakespeare, he never fails in self-assertion at the right psychical moment; so he coalesces and collaborates with the greatest dramatic genius of the time, till he quite appropriates Marlowe's distinctive gift, and indeed Marlowe himself.

Very researchful and erudite has been the quest for the authorship of these five plays, furnishing infinite occupation to the learned critic and the University Professor, who have remorselessly dug up for illustration not only the bones but the very dust of the long-dead scribbling nobodies of Elizabethan Literature from their underground mausoleum. It is on the whole the most remarkable feat of its kind in all Shakespearology, and, if we may judge by recent elaborate English editions of the poet, this work of excavation is

still going on more intently than ever. But the hard-hunted foxy author, be he other than Shakespeare himself, seems to turn misty, always escaping overhead out of reach, and being able to elude the search and the research and re-research up to date, as far as the ordinary reader can make out from the enormous piles of erudition, which we shall now simply take the time to skip.

Accordingly let us at once pass to the more open and significant question: What led the young poet Shakespeare to hit upon the age and character of Henry VI as the prelude theme of his dramatic career? England had just done a great historic deed in the defeat of the Armada, and knew it well; hence she was eager to behold her own past history, which told her how she had grandly got to be what she then was. The Tudor age and spirit were a direct evolution out of the Wars of the Roses; hence that Elizabethan audience wished to behold itself in the mirror of its own historic self-realisation. Then the era of Henry VI was probably England's most formative, protoplasmic time; her whole institutional world as unfolded by the Middle Ages was flung into the seething cauldron of Civil War for quite half a century, in order to be first disintegrated and thereafter to be reconstructed into the new order which was just culminating in Queen Elizabeth's epoch. The English drama had already made itself the vehicle of showing this grand national transformation. The so-called History

Chronicle, antecedent to Shakespeare, had evolved into his *Henry VI*, which from this viewpoint may be deemed a transitional drama, bridging the old species over into the new, the latter being Shakespeare's own later Histories, as they are duly titled in the First Folio.

Thus the poet has seized the national spirit of his time and represented it to itself in its own native form, which is that of his English historical dramas. And here another result of such occupation must not be omitted from the record of his education. Through this early discipline of history, Shakespeare gets to know and to realize in himself the basic, most original institution of England, namely her political system; such is the prime training which makes him supremely the institutional poet of all the centuries. *Henry VI* was his great preparatory school of institutions, which he saw and portrayed going through their most fiery trial, and finally coming out regenerated and purified, yet ready for another testing evolution, or even revolution after the Tudors, which of course he did not live to witness. The English State, genetic source of the American Constitution also, has become the chief model of the new European Polities, and the nearest approach as yet to a World-State. Of this universally creative Institution, which is the most original social product of the Anglo-Saxon folk, Shakespeare is the poetic re-creator and earth-circling propagator. Still we are not to forget that all those

historical plays taken together constitute but one portion of the total Shakespearian Pan-drama.

Shakespeare himself must have felt a strong personal attraction for the subject of *Henry VI*, since he experienced at this time the like spiritual condition, for he was passing through the break from his simple Stratford country-life into the new complex London city-life, where he stood in the palpitating nerve-center of the time's great national convulsion and transformation. He wrote himself out into his drama, his experience dictated his theme for his own self-expression. And when looking back upon his completed Pan-dramatic achievement, the editors of the First Folio, doubtless representing Shakespeare himself, must have regarded *Henry VI* with its Three Parts as constituting an integral member of the poet's total poetic organism, as indeed its primal embryonic protoplasm, out of which his whole life and work were to be shaped and upbuilt. For all the elements of it were then cotemporaneously protoplasmic—England, the English drama, the English dramatist. All three, we may say, collaborated instinctively, and hence more deeply than if by any conscious purpose, to lay the foundation of that poetic world-structure here named the Shakespearian Pan-drama.

There is another suggestion which may be here pointed out to the student in advance: it is the strain of prophecy which so often breaks up to the surface in the present Trilogy. This pre-

saging vein may be regarded not merely as a play-making device, but as the inward urge of the poet's own nature, which drives him to an outlook-forecast of what is to become hereafter both in the time and in himself. He feels his day to be at the dawn of some great futurity, and his genius is full of prescience which utters itself in these foretelling characters. Thus he gives us repeated glimpses into his own prophetic soul, as he glances out upon his coming career.

Nor are we to forget that there is an under-current of the age's deepest tendency running through this whole Trilogy, which often touches the conflict of the two worlds, the old Latin and the rising Anglo-Saxon, between which the strife is specially marked in the representatives of Church and State, whose two authorities here directly clash. But in Elizabeth's time, Spain instead of France had become the far stronger, richer, and more intense Latin protagonist both secular and religious. Whereof in this Trilogy we may catch some distant echoes.

I. *The First Part of Henry VI.* This play has a bad name among commentators who stress its manifold shortcomings. And it certainly possesses little inner unity, being rather a succession of separate dramatic pictures strwn along many years than one concentrated action. Still it has a single leading theme: England's loss of France through English weakness, folly, and dissension. Hence an ill-omened theme to Englishmen still

in Elizabeth's time, though more than a century after the event.

But just on account of this discursive treatment and its lack of organisation it connects with the antecedent Chronicle History, as it was called, and also suggests the unripe and unpractised beginner, young Shakespeare. So it has its biographic position and value. Still it may have been written after the *Second Part of Henry VI*, for the purpose of joining in one loose stretch of events the latter chronologically with *Henry V*, and thus of overarching the whole reign of Henry VI in one dramatic Trilogy. But its scattered inorganic character remains, and leads us to consider it on the whole as the poet's most protoplasmic play.

Moreover the first six lines look back to the preceding Lancastrian drama of *Henry V*, and interrelate it with the forthcoming Trilogy. They are also written in a pompous high-flown style which recalls Marlowe:

Hung be the heavens with black, yield day
to night!
Comets, importing change of times and states
Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,
And with them scourge the bad revolting stars
That have consented unto Henry's death—
King Henry the Fifth, too famous to live long!

Here we feel young Shakespeare collaborating spir-

itually with Marlowe, if not literally, for we can hear in these lines Tamburlaine's grandiose orotundity of expression. As they are printed in the First Folio, the poet must be taken to acknowledge them as his own writing, even if dictated by Marlowe's spirit. To be sure, Coleridge, with bad judgment and worse temper, has denied and even maligned any Shakespearian participation in this passage, chiefly on metrical grounds. But Coleridge hardly conceived the poet's Life-drama in its evolution.

The present play has also its suggestions in regard to Shakespeare's most distinctive gift, that of character-drawing. We may watch him here in his early grapple with souls manifesting themselves in their outer actions. He starts now to creating, or rather re-creating people and making them live and move for the theatre's onlooker. Herein he is still more or less embryonic and tentative. He takes essences or ideas, putting them into body and making them act humanly. For instance, at the start he seizes two opposite principles representing the deepest conflict of the time, namely that of State and Church, or of England and Rome, and voices these principles and their strife in two strong colliding personalities, Gloucester the State's regent and Winchester the Church's prelate. Their outlines are large, irregular, rough-hewn, but smiting; the later Shakespearian subtleties of characterisation have not yet risen to the surface. Indeed the time is coarse-grained, up-

roarious and bellicose, given to quick, hard-fisted blows, and to hot revenges.

Here we are brought to face the most furiously unanimous assault upon this play because of the poet's character of the Pucelle, or the Maid of Orleans. Shakespeare's own character has often been included in this chorus of damnation, and he may not be at every point blame-proof. But no critic within our knowledge has fully grasped the first matter here to be emphasized, which is this: there are two Joan Darcs in the play—two characters of the one Maid not only diverse but contradictory. When the French speak of her, she is treated with all sympathy, her divine mission is recognized; she has beheld in vision the true need of her country, which she proceeds to liberate through her miraculous power. But the Englishmen scout her claims, defame her honor, make her deny her own father; her cunning is deemed by them of the devil, and finally they burn her for a witch. Such are the two opposite views of her, which really spring from the two opposing nations; one of these her work is to save by the defeat and expulsion of the other. Hence we behold two antagonistic, mutually repellent Joan Darcs, as if she may have had a double, self-combative personality (which by the way is one construction of her character).

Still this contradiction in the portraiture of Joan Dare is the defect, the grand disharmony in the drama. Such a result may spring from the im-

maturity of the poet, who, seeking to give impartially both sides, the French and the English, allows their shrilling dissonance to remain in the heroine's character. Or here we may find the cleavage of a double collaboration, the unfavorable view of the woman being set forth by Marlowe, who has shown himself elsewhere a misogynist, in contrast to Shakespeare's pervasive woman-love.

Time has, however, more and more vindicated the French view of France's illustrious heroine, in spite of the ribaldry and obscenity of one of her greatest writers. It is Voltaire, who in his *Pucelle*, has more than magnified the old-English foul conception of her deed and character, as represented in the bad half of Shakespeare's picture. But to-day's France has again taken up Joan Dare in deepest affection, and idealized her in art and poetry as her country's heroic exemplar during the recent world-war with Germany. And we read that the Church has resolved to confer at Rome upon the French Maid the somewhat belated rite of canonization, which is indeed taking place while we write this sentence. St. Denys seems thus to be supplanted by a woman-saint in the revived worshipful soul of France, hitherto often not so very worshipful.

Another strong genetic scene in this play is that which is enacted in the Temple Garden where Richard Plantagenet plucks a white rose and Somerset a red rose in mutual opposition. Thus the two roses become the symbols of the two col-

liding Houses of York and Lancaster, whose strife carries us into the next play pertaining to Henry VI. On account of its superior style and handling, we may note an advance of Marlowe's pupil, though collaborating spiritually and doubtless literally with the master.

II. *The Second Part of Henry VI.* This is in our opinion decidedly the best play of the Trilogy, the largest in conception, though its organism still remains more or less in the protoplasmic stage of the poet. We can see him chalking great outlines of characterisation, especially in the case of Queen Margaret and of Henry the King, both of whom throw their morning gleams upon a number of his future dramatic creations. Most significant, too, is the upburst of the folk's under-world, which, in one shape or other, streams through the whole argument from the first act to the last: greatest example of which is the outbreak of the proletariat under Jack Cade. The strife which England directed against another neighboring and cognate people, is now turned around into herself; her external assault on France becomes internal with a national Nemesis. English dissension, which weakened the armies abroad, drives savagely at the home-land, and the result is Civil War famed as that of the Roses. Kings and Nobles, in the furious struggle for the supreme power of the State, slaughter one another in the very gluttony of mutual retribution.

Dominating and centering the drama is a woman,

Queen Margaret, the strong-willed married to the weak-willed King Henry VI, whose sovereignty it is her supreme ambition to seize and wield absolutely. She comes from France and is thus the second French woman (the other being Joan Dare) who shows herself able to rise up a destructive fate suspended over England. The poet through her enemy York has not failed to suggest her national origin and character.

She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves
of France,
Whose tongue more poisons than the ad-
der's tooth!

Thus is indicated the transition from the preceding First Part to the present Second Part of *Henry VI*: the hostility of France, represented by a woman, has crossed the channel and has become seated on the very throne of England—a French Fury now wearing the English crown. The character of this French-born English queen is drawn in massive, strong, but somewhat exaggerated features, doubtless after the Marlowese model. She is a man-woman—sexed as a beautiful, artful, vain female, yet unsexed as a will-powerful, ambitious, blood-thirsty male. The poet caught a hint of her double nature from the old chronicle of Hall, which he read and reproduced: Queen Margaret, it reports, “excelled all others in beauty and favor, as well as in wit and policy,” (feminine excellences), but also “she was in stom-

ach (daring) and courage more like a man than a woman." The same dualistic character is given her in the play from various mouths, for instance

And yet be seen to bear a woman's face!
 Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible,
 Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless!

And fitting into this context may be cited the best known line of the play, since it was slightly altered and hurled by the bitter-souled Robert Greene against Shakespeare himself:

O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!

the word *woman's* being changed to *player's* by Greene, as is instanced on a preceding page.

Here we see doubtless the earliest example of the poet assigning the dominant place in his drama to the woman. Soon hereafter he will repeat this female enthronement over the male in a number of comedies, as we may note in the case of Portia, of Rosalind, of Helena. Already we have underscored the fact that such a supremacy of the woman lay deep and long in his own experience, for he saw her ever regnant in his own home during his entire youth. And when he passed outside the Family to London, to the center of the State, what did he witness? Queen Elizabeth's strong, self-assertive masculinity over the greatest men of her court. Indeed one often thinks in reading this play, that Elizabeth must have more than once furnished strokes for Margaret's picture—

the petty female vanities of her as well as her greatnesses, with even that vagrant hint of her secret love-life. And Margaret's extreme jealousy and cruelty toward any queenly rival brings to mind Elizabeth's dealing with Mary Queen of Scots, when we hear Margaret explode:

Not all these lords do vex me half so much
As that proud dame, the Lord Protector's wife:

who also aspires to be England's Queen and claims the throne, according to the right of inheritance. And she too finally like Mary is entrapped to her fate. So we may catch a faint reflection of the impression produced upon the sensitive poet by the execution of the Scottish Queen Mary, which took place in 1587; probably during the composition of this drama.

But Margaret with all her strength, as portrayed by Shakespeare, is a deeply destructive, vengeful, diabolic character, who at last turns to the very picture and voice of Nemesis (see her and hear her last in *Richard III*). Thus our young poet starts his career by dramatizing the infernal female—at this point I would stress the collaborative influence of the decided woman-hater Kit Marlowe. But Shakespeare's own life-experience at Stratford had already furnished some fertile soil for the growth of such a poisonous, even if colossal upas-tree. Yet I would hold that Marlowe's Satanic Titanism was now the main power at work upon the still boyishly impressionable

poet, who was yet at school to the mighty but sinister master. And the gigantic lesson of the negative woman remained with him to the end of his days, for he repeated Margaret, undoubtedly with significant variations, in Lady Macbeth many years later during his Middle Period, and we feel him reproducing demonic Margaret again in King Cymbeline's Queen, whose royal female deviltry is exquisitely brought out in one of his latest plays (Cymbeline).

And now we come to her grand contrast, her own crowned husband with his elaborately limned character, deeply moralized yet unwilling through his very morality and piety. More of the woman is his than of the man, and it is a woman, his own wife and queen, who flings at him reproachfully his unsexed nature:

Fie! womanish man! canst thou not curse
thine enemies?

No other line tells in one mad splash of words so much about him and about her, and yet it occurs only in "The Contention", having been somehow dropped out of its true place and weakened in the revised *Second Part of Henry VI* (see W. A. Wright's edition of "The Contention", Act III, Scene II, line 145 for the verse in its most effective form and thrust, being there directed at the King and not at her lover Suffolk, for whom it has little point). On the other hand, Margaret, obsessed by the love of regal power,

might commune with herself now in the words of her later self, Lady Macbeth:

Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-ful
Of direst cruelty!

Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering
ministers.

But the physical and the intellectual antithesis between King and Queen is not their deepest, but the moral; their ultimate differentiation lies in their conscience. The supreme lack of it makes the woman masculine, the supreme excess of it makes the man feminine; and now the woman-soul unconscienced is wedded to the man-soul conscienced. Later in Richard III the poet will summon before us a King unconscienced as the male facsimile to Margaret, the Queen, who will tell him back his own, both being products of this vampire-bearing age. Still later in Hamlet we shall behold another conscienced Henry VI, whose will is unmanned through conscience, and who knows his own frailty well, confessing it with bitter self-reproach in the calmly terrible line (pivotal not only for Hamlet but for Shakespeare himself):

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.

That is, it makes a coward of me specially, just this Hamlet. (I am fully aware that in this well-

worn passage the meaning of the word *conscience* has been utterly perverted and eviscerated by forcing it to signify *thought* or *reflection*—a deed of murder done to Hamlet himself worse than that done to his father. Some nemesis lowers for the perpetrators of this dark deed later on, when we come to the Hamlet play).

Several times in the present drama the word *conscience* is used by King Henry VI, and no other character utters it except him. It is indeed his personal word, and moreover it is not found in the previous play of *The First Part of Henry VI*, whose action takes place chiefly during the nursing years of the boy-king, who nevertheless gives a few foretokens of his prevailing bent. But conscience with its synonyms becomes now his soul's own breviary, enthroning the moral judgment within the man, and asserting itself as the absolute inner umpire of our outer actions, which may thus by it get quite vetoed and generally lamed. So our poet-psychologist has repeatedly construed the reaction of conscience upon the will, whereof Henry VI is only the prelude example. Hence this King's speeches are replete with good moral maxims, valid in their due limits, but in their excess hamstringing all activity. This may be illustrated by a famous citation from Henry's moralizing anthology:

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;

And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

Who does not feel uplifted by these pithy moral apothegms? And yet the good king will find out, and the play will show him finding out, that his "heart untainted" needs a "stronger breast-plate" than merely itself in order to exist in this world, that his own "just quarrel" even with its triple armor, did not preserve him from becoming tragic in life's conflict.

Thus we behold the young dramatist opening his career in a desperate wrestle with conscience and its moral challenge. He must already have had some personal knowledge of this inner regnant authority, the individual's own self-crowned kingship, for it is Shakespeare's way, as already indicated, to distil his most intimate experience into his dramatic characters. Moreover the time was getting to have its own alert and aggressive conscience, being roused to a fresh intense activity through the Reformation, and in England especially through the rising Puritanism, that new English Reformation of the Reformation. Shakespeare, the supremely responsive chronicler of his age, could not help feeling and sharing this deepest palpitation of the time's heart. Most commentators say he was hostile to Puritanism, but I do not so construe his word and deed; on the contrary he partook, with sympathy but without excess, of this unique soul-searching manifestation

of the nation's inner evolution. An undertow of conscience we shall find streaming and straining through his entire Life-drama from this earliest work till his last.

But the present play is chiefly remembered as the one in which Jack Cade, the reformer and the revolutionist, starts up as the opponent of King and Nobles, and it is his strong, craggy-featured but humorous portrait here drawn by Shakespeare which is usually cited as proof of the poet's aristocratic or anti-democratic bias. This year (1920) Cade rouses new interest as the leader of the so-called proletariat, which has risen in rebellion against individual ownership of property as well as against the titled classes, and also shows itself hostile to all education, for one of Cade's condemned malefactors has been guilty of "erecting a grammar-school" (perchance at Stratford) and of having caused "printing to be used," and "thou hast built a paper mill." Such is the new equality of ignorance proclaimed by Cade, who also decrees: "And henceforward all things shall be in common." So that old-new communism of goods and wives is here touched up by Shakespeare, undoubtedly with a little teeheeing laugh all to himself.

Accordingly it turns out that this *Second Part of Henry VI* is Shakespeare's chief drama of popular discontent, though he introduces the same theme elsewhere. Social unrest, as we call it in these days, underlies the whole drama, and often

seethes up to the surface in various uncanny outbreaks. Most important of all, the Commons rise in revolt against the government on account of the murder of "the good Duke Humphrey," being led by the king-maker Warwick, whose ambition has taken advantage of a situation which he thus describes:

The Commons, like an angry hive of bees,
That want their leader, scatter up and down,
And care not who they sting in his revenge.

Such is the folk's "spleenful mutiny", which the artful king-maker puts to the fore against the unmanned King and the unwomaned Queen, whose weak discordant rule he with the Commons will supplant, usurping the regal power which underlies the throne.

But there are other darker, more hidden operations which spring from the infernal underworld of the time. An uncanny thread of forbidden magic is spun by "Margery Jourdan the cunning witch", with the aid of "Roger Bolingbroke the conjurer," who have promised to call up "a spirit raised from depth of underground". Caught in their maleficent toils is sent to banishment the Duchess Eleanor, wife of good Duke Humphrey, who also gets smirched in their pitch. Then we see the servant Peter turning informer and secretly betraying his master, who in an unguarded moment had said, "that the king was an usurper", the rightful heir being the Duke of York. Also a re-

ligious imposter Simpcox creeps forth out of his dark lair to daylight, shouting "a miracle! a miracle!" But being detected and whipped he takes to his heels mid the scoff's of the ungodly. Hired assassins waylay and murder "the good Duke Humphrey" for a price. Then in just retribution, pirates at sea slay the murderer and adulterer Suffolk. The bad Cardinal Beaufort dies, beholding visions of retribution like those of Macbeth.

Thus no less than six hellish upbursts from the infernal regions now aflame everywhere underneath England we may count in the course of this play, constituting its chief peculiarity among the works of Shakespeare. Never again to the same excessive amount will he employ such dramatic brimstone, which smells here more of master Marlowe than of pupil Shakespeare. Still this lower world of the folk finds its due counterpart in the upper world of royalty and nobility, who are making a Pandemonium of mutual carnage out of Britain, and like fiends broken loose from Satan's Netherdom are hugely charactered with blood-guilt and blood-revenge.

But the greatest, the most significant, yea the most prophetic of all these upheavals is that of "John Cade of Ashford, a headstrong Kentishman", the bricklayer's son, whose words have to-day a familiar note echoing around the whole globe. We may now hear shouted from all lands, not merely from that one little speck of English

soil named Blackheath, a language not unlike that which Cade addresses to his class called by him the Commons, at present known as the Proletariat. Cade universalized we read and think to-day, and as such he is more ominous, aye more prophetic than ever before. And so we presentimentally hang over his broken utterances in this play, one of which, rather ragged in style but plain enough in its general intent, we may here set down :

And you, that love the Commons, follow me.
Now show yourselves men ; 'tis for liberty.
We will not leave one lord, one gentleman ;
Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon,
For they are thrifty honest men, and such
As would, but that they dare not, take our parts.

Such is Shakespeare's Cade whom many would now call a Bolshevik. From this earliest work of the poet let us for a moment turn to his last play, *The Tempest*, in which he again gives us a glimpse of an ideal idle community of a workless folk, whose one extreme is reached in the reveling speech of liberty-loving drunken Caliban : "Freedom, heyday, heyday, freedom, freedom, heyday freedom!" Such may be conceived the outcome of Jack Cade's popular decree : "the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer."

III. *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth*. Here is a good deal of letting-down at a number of

points; strikingly the present drama shrivels, being much inferior to the preceding one in breadth and grandeur of conception as well as in wealth of characters, even if it may claim a closer though narrower unity of action. Chiefly it keeps up the bloody seesaw of Nemesis between the two Roses, white and red. Thus it continues and repeats what has been already enacted to a sufficiency. Battle succeeds battle, murder requites murder, till at last the Lancastrians, represented by the king and his son, are swept away in death, and the Trilogy ends with the triumph of the Yorkists, who, however, cannot halt the rapid rush of their own self-undoing.

In this drama is no upburst from the dark, seething, nether depths of the folk-soul, which gives such a new prophetic interest to the preceding play. The scenic movement is quite confined to the upper classes, the noble and the royal combatants, who slash each other frantically out of life. Even the king-maker Warwick is now unkinged by death; he must be eliminated, if kingship is to survive in England. The will-paralytic Henry VI shows himself still unmanned through his conscience, to whose behest he is ready to surrender even his crown, exclaiming: "I know not what to say, my title's weak," and he actually gives up his son's future right of succession to the throne. An echo of his inner voice may be heard in the words of Exeter: "My conscience tells me he [York] is lawful king." Whereupon

the conscienceless but motherly Margaret breaks out in will-assertive energy:

I here divorce myself
Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed,
Until that act of parliament be repeal'd,
Whereby my son is disinherited.

But even the slight compromise in favor of Henry is torn to pieces by the maddened sons of York, who insist upon their father's immediate possession of kingship, which is his right. And so the mutual blood-letting again starts the time's mortal surgery.

But the main interest of the present drama centers in the fierce germination and crimson flowering of the character of Richard, son of York, who is hereafter to be staged by Shakespeare perennially as King Richard III. Already in the previous play we have caught a forecast of his inborn fighting nature when he savagely roars: "And if words will not, then our weapons shall." Also that peculiar demoniacal stress upon his bodily malformation as mirroring his inner crooked soul we begin to hear in Clifford's reproach:

Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump:
As crooked in thy manners as thy shape.

But in the present play we soon are given an outlook upon the future of the man, his supreme goal and his remorseless means for attaining it—the Kingship. So we scan carefully this early self-revelation of him in which lurks not only what he

is but what he is to be (Henry VI, Part III, A. I. Sc. 2):

Your oath, my lord, is vain and frivolous—
 Therefore, to arms! And, father, do but think
 How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown
 Within whose circuit is Elysium,
 And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.
 Why do we linger thus? I cannot rest
 Until the white rose that I wear be dyed
 Even in the lukewarm blood of Henry's
 heart.

Perjury, war, murder he will use in order "to wear a crown", and will destroy on his way thereto not only the hostile red rose but also his own white rose to its last surviving member, who is just himself.

In unfolding the character of Richard we always feel the influence, if not the hand, of the poet's master, Marlowe, whose Tamburlane tells on the author himself:

The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown
 Moved me to manage arms against thy state—
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

Thus Tamburlane gives his supreme motive: the ambition for sovereign power. To the same purport we may now observe Shakespeare letting Richard soliloquize his deepest desire:

I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown ;
 And, whiles I live, to account this world but hell,
 Until my mis-shap'd trunk, that bears this head,
 Be round impaled with a glorious crown.

Evidently Marlowe's Tamburlane and Shakespeare's Richard III are endowed with the same ultimate passion: the resolve to kingly rule, without regard to any scruple of love, pity, or right. Yet Richard has a personal trait distinct from Tamburlane: his hideous physical deformity which envenoms his diabolic scoffing at his own body, on whose shape corrupt nature "in my mother's womb" wreaked her spite:

To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub ;
 To make an envious mountain on my back,
 Where sits deformity to mock my body,
 To shape my legs of an unequal size,
 To disproportion me in every part
 Like to a chaos—

Thus he champions his own monstrosity with a kind of gloating hyberbole. But this unique and indeed capital trait of self-cynicism in Richard is not found in Tamburlane, who rather glorifies or even defies his own heroic organism:

Of stature tall and straightly fashioned,
 Like his desire lift upward and divine,
 So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit
 Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear
 Old Atlas' burden. (*Tamburlane*, Part First,
 Act II. Sc. 1)

Whence may the incipient and still collaborating poet have caught his first original glimpse of this rarest, most individual stroke of Richard's soul-picture? Again we shall find it dreamily suggested, though massively and rudely, by the ever-prolific Marlowe in his drama of *Faustus*, of which the fiend Mephistopheles, "servant of Lucifer" is a leading character, endowed both with inner deviltry and corresponding outer deformity. Indeed the demon's first appearance there was so horrible that even Faustus could not endure his hideous look, and so commands him to go back and disguise his awful ugliness (Marlow's *Faustus* Scene 3.):

I charge thee to return and change thy shape!
Thou art too ugly to attend on me.
Go and return an old Franciscan friar,
That holy shape becomes a devil best.

Of course, Shakespeare eliminates this savage satire against the Church, which may be indicative of a certain sympathy with it, and completely humanizes Mephistopheles in Richard, who, however, still keeps and amplifies and indeed intensifies the fiend's caustic, self-cynical word-venom.

Somewhere about 1589, it has been reasonably conjectured, the *Faustus* of Marlowe was staged, having been composed not long before. Thus it falls within the time of the Shakespeare-Marlowe collaborative partnership. Moreover the Faust legend had been brought to England from Ger-

many, first possibly by strolling actors who then often wandered overseas. But its chief traceable source was the English version of Johann Spiess' Faust-book translated from the German and printed at London in 1588, whence it was popularized in tale, drama, and ballad. Thus Shakespeare must have heard and read the Faust-legend in his early formative time, and it became a part of his protoplasmic literary material, whereof traces may often be spied by the watchful reader. Direct allusions to "Faustus" and to "Mephostophilus" bubble up twice in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, not to speak of other unnamed hints. But in *Henry IV* Falstaff is reported to have sold his soul to the devil "for a cup of Madeira and a cold capon's leg"—a humorous echo of the central fact of the Faust legend.

But the main point here to be emphasized is that the poet-apprentice now in his primal workshop smelts together two huge sons of thunder born of his master Marlowe, Tamburlane and Mephostophilus, both loftily reverberant of name like their deed, into one colossal and enduring personality, Richard III. So we construe our new Promethean man-former Shakespeare, as we watch him mightily laboring and wrestling with his refractory stuff and often repeating his giant strokes in this *Third Part of Henry VI*. We may also observe that the poet is now winning his supreme lesson, having compounded into one eternal character two of his master's grandiose but unfulfilled conceptions,

which he has thus absorbed and transcended. For Marlowe's two figures, though each be as crudely colossal as an Egyptian statue, are alive and active to-day chiefly in and through Shakespeare's Richard III.

Here, then, the hapless Trilogy of Henry VI sinks to its end, a scattered, ferocious, but also ferocious jungle of writ, germinating wildly everywhere, and containing as it were, the embryology of the entire coming Shakespearian productivity. Hence we have spent so much microscopy upon it, not for its own poetic sake indeed, but because it exhibits our poet's dramatic school, headed by that Titanic but unrealized genius, dominie' Kit Marlowe, wonderfully seedful, even if of the seedy. Be it noted again that we have omitted all erudite pursuit of this Trilogy's multiple authorship, a game which seems to lead everywhither into nowhere.

We have, accordingly, reached commencement-day of the foregoing Marlowese school, whose star pupil, William Shakespeare, now writes under his own name his graduation piece, *Richard III*. This, on the one hand, may be pronounced to have the most Mephistophelian character in the poet's entire Pan-drama, shot through, as Richard is, with the devil's unique self-caricaturing irony. But on the other hand, by way of deepest counter-thrust, the battle of conscience is taken up and intensified from *Henry VI*, being more emphasized and elaborated than in any other play of Shakespeare, with

the possible exception of *Hamlet*. The furious dualism between Conscience and Devil lurks ultimate in Richard's soul, is indeed Richard's very selfhood, and he knows it; so he keeps fighting and even describing his inner battle, which is yet more desperate and tragic than his outer bloody combat. Just here lies the immortality of the present drama, its deathless lesson and interest for us dual mortals, who likewise find in ourselves a more or less vivid copy of the same sort of warfare.

Another thought will obtrude itself: graduate Shakespeare cannot help giving some pictured outline of his great teacher, with whose genius and character he has lived and labored in deepest communion, probably for a couple of years or more. In master Marlowe himself, I think, he could witness the hardest battle between Conscience and the Devil ever fought on the arena of a human soul. Thus Shakespeare pours into the capacious personation of Richard III his own immediate individual experience with his teacher, who was also at the time his exemplar, his compelling model. For he could see the conjunction and fusion of Marlowe's two supreme characters, the would-be world-conqueror Tamburlane and the would-be world-destroyer Mephistopheles, in the man before him, who is also known to have had his long and tragic struggle with the time's conscience. And the poet felt and ejected out of himself into his work his own Titanic mood.

But before we quit this very embryonic Trilogy

of *Henry VI*, we may well listen to the corrosive words toward its close, in which Gloster, the right child and heir of the Wars of the Roses, gives vent to the inmost thought of himself, affirming his utterly isolated and demonized character as the genuine product of the time's militarism:

Then, since the heavens have shap'd my body so,
Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it,
I have no brother, I am like no brother;
And this word love, which greybeards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me: I am myself alone.—

Such a completely de-socialized individual has the long national strife brought forth in its final evolution. Richard declares that he can no longer associate with his fellow-man, having abjured all love: *I am myself alone*. This colossal conception of the destroyer of man's institutional world has gotten hold of our young dramatic graduate, who proposes to realize it in his new-won art. So let us now witness intently his prelude drama, which, with all its independence and originality, still bears the signal impress of the previous collaborative influence of Master Marlowe.

III.

Richard III.

No little difference of opinion among the most expert date-hunters concerning the right birth-year

of this Shakespearian play: they vary the time of its composition some six or eight years among themselves. But what is for us the most important matter, its place in the evolution of our poet's Life-drama can be fixed with reasonable precision: it fills its own independent niche just after *Henry VI*, out of whose somewhat nebulous mass it seems rapidly to shoot forth a brilliant well-defined star, not of the first but of the second or perchance third magnitude, in the constellation Shakespeare.

This, then, is the prime salient characteristic which we have to emphasize: the drama of Richard III is strikingly and rather suddenly individualized out of the poet's previous protoplasmic material, and as a work it rounds itself out to a distinctive wholeness. Still further, its characters rise up and begin to shape themselves in clearer outlines from that as yet rather unformed but form-seeking mass of personages known as the Trilogy of Henry VI. But especially one mighty Titanic individual greets us at the very start of the action, and holds us in his demonic fascination till the close, with a spell which has shown itself deathless. Richard Crookback still strides with devilish limp the stage, and has become acquainted with more people to-day than ever before. And one other grand personality rises clearly above the horizon, separate, independent, the new creator of these new personalities: the dramatist Shakespeare. He is no longer here in mere collaboration, indistinctively commingled with other dramatists;

he has become himself, he can say with his leading character, though in a different spirit, and he does say by his creative deed: "I am myself alone." But he still carries, even in his independence, the fadeless impress of his teacher Marlowe.

Such is the spirit which can be felt through these mightily but often roughly hammered and hammering verses, as they assert with a grand defiance the fresh-born individuality of the poet. That is what he has in common with Richard, not being like him the murderer, perjurer, devil, except ideally for the time being. We may indeed take this play, as already said, to be Shakespeare's declaration of independence; he proclaims the freedom of his genius henceforth without being trammelled from elsewhere, and it may be regarded as his first completely self-dependent production in the total sweep of his Life-drama.

Still we can trace an outside powerful influence interweaving with the very flow of the poet's own creative energy. In style the present drama is largely Marlowese, at times Marlowesque. We can often feel in it the ground-swell of Oceanic *Tamburlane*, which began a new era in the history of the English stage and also in Shakespeare's evolution. The mighty line of Christopher Marlowe (as Ben Jonson has baptized it forever) is here heard again in all its mightiness—and something more. Yes, decidedly something more—and what is it?

Various differences have been pointed out between Marlowe and Shakespeare, for there is felt

to be some all-compelling antithesis between the two grandeurs, though both be endowed supremely with the godlikeness of poetic genius. We read Marlowe to-day, and certainly with uplift and admiration; still we hunt after him and study him chiefly for the sake of his pupil Shakespeare, whose hidden filaments of origin reaching far down into unconscious deeps we have to dig for, as being not the least of our time's cultural tasks. One of these differences has been often set forth: Marlowe, very unlike Shakespeare herein, has little or no humor, and hence little or no relief from the overwhelming grandiosity of his expression, whose verbal cataract tosses you around and wears you out in trying to swim with it, even to listen to its Niagara. Then his characters he sculptured as far-off prodigious Titans, in a kind of fog-world, not as sunlit Olympian Gods, nor as clear-cut mortal heroes, with their limited humanity. Then again Marlowe did not know the woman-soul, though he has his female characters. He never got hold of the real woman—and his life, yea his death shows it—whereas Shakespeare loved and appreciated the woman better than he did the man, for which bent he had good experience at home in his boyhood. To these well-known and acknowledged short-comings, I am going to add another which becomes of special significance in this our study of Richard III, by way of contrast. Here it is: Marlowe has little or no Conscience; while in Shakespeare Conscience with its ups and downs, with its yes and its

no, with its rewards and its punishments, with its pungent criticism of life, winds through his whole London Pan-drama from start to finish. Some strong thrusts of it we have already found in *Henry VI*, but in our present drama it is an inner, deep-flowing ever-lashing undercurrent, or I might dare personify it and circumscribe it as an actual character, calling it Conscience herself in person, who, getting voice in one shape and another, glides through the entire action, as it were uttering her doom inside and underneath the outer doings of Richard, who drives on in his destructive hurricane of vengeance to his final catastrophe.

Here, accordingly, I would align the grand transition from head master Marlowe to his graduate Shakespeare, or from the unfledged novice and learner to the free-winged poet, who now goes into business on his own account. An epochal transition in this Life-drama of his we think it, passing as it does from his early embryonic outpushes to his full-born, even if still callow productivity

But now our turn comes to stress and to exemplify definitely this persistent ever-driving undertow of Conscience which streams through the whole drama, and especially through the inner subjective nature of Richard, otherwise the outwardly deedful villain, as he calls himself, when he says "I am determined to prove a villain." Nevertheless, we hear him recognize in one of his earliest soliloquies, the existence of these deeper internal forces even while gloating with diabolic

irony on his swift triumph over dutiful but weak Princess Anne:

Having God, her *Conscience*, and these
 bars against me,
 And I no friends to back my suit withal,
 But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
 And yet to win her, *all the world to nothing!*

Thus the old-new Serpent has again fascinated this right daughter of our first mother Eve, with the irresistible charm of original sin, of Satan incarnate. Still he soon hears from the outside his own inner counterstroke voiced by Queen Margaret in her frantic curse:

On thee, the troubler of the world's peace--
 The worm of *Conscience* still begnaw thy soul--

as it has been doing and will continue to do in him, and in her as well, for she knows all about it, being quite his female counterpart.

Such are the two voices, which the poet still further makes real and externalizes in the two murderers whom Richard has hired to stab his brother Clarence in the Tower. They represent the dualized Crookback himself as the outer monster yet with his inner monitor. For in the Second Murderer "that word *Judgment* hath bred a kind of Remorse", and he penitently declares that "some certain dregs of *Conscience* are yet within me", while the First Murderer exclaims, quite like the outer Richard: "Remember our reward, when the

deed is done." But the Second Murderer still dallies like the inner Richard over his Conscience: "I'll not meddle with it; it makes a man a coward; a man cannot steal but it accuseth him; a man cannot swear but it checks him; it beggars any man that keeps it"—whereupon the vacillator braces himself up to doing the deed of guilt along with his conscienceless companion. But at once we hear the counterstroke of Conscience in his soul-wrung lament:

A bloody deed and desperately dispatched!
 How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
 Of this most grievous guilty murder done.
 'Take thou the fee—

First murderer in reply: "Go, coward as thou art!" wherein we may foresee Lady Macbeth washing her hands in sleep, and crying, "Out, damned spot!" and may also forehear melancholy Hamlet's far-echoing line of will-lessness: "Thus Conscience does make cowards of us all!" But the main point is, that now we behold the two Richards thrown out into two contrasted characters which prefigure his double personality with its inner conflict and final fate.

Richard, accordingly, reaches his supreme goal, which is the throne of England, through a successful career of treachery and murder. But his Conscience, especially as reflected in his dream-life, has meanwhile not kept idle; on the contrary it has been hounding him like a Fury all through his

underworld just during the hours devoted to repose. Whereof the wife at his side gives her startling testimony:

For never yet one hour in his bed
Did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep,
But with his timorous dreams was still awak'd.

Thus Richard like Macbeth through his guilt "hath murdered Sleep", and therefore like him Richard "shall sleep no more", for it is Sleep which breaks his waking will and unleashes all the dream-fiends of his nether life to harry his rest.

The consummation of this dream-world of Richard is shudderingly poetized in the last Act when the ghosts of all his murdered kindred and friends are marshaled before his frenzied imagination in sleep, till he starts up at first in prayer, from which, however, he soon recovers:

Have mercy, Jesu! Soft! I did but dream!
O, coward Conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
The lights burn blue—it is now dead midnight—
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.

Thus he again turns vengefully upon that inward monitor of his, and punisher too, when the soldier in him exclaims, "What do I fear? myself? There's none else by." Hereupon Richard begins a talk with Richard; the two Richards have together a dialogue like the two murderers—or is it a monologue representing a kind of double personality? At any rate Richard Crookback or rather

Richard Crooksoul, has finally been made aware of his two contradictory natures, both of which now are tongued against each other, and engage in a furious word-duel, as desperate as any outer sword-combat.

I am a villain ; yet I lie, I am not.—
Fool, of thyself speak well ; fool, do not flatter.
My Conscience hath a thousand several tongues
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Thus the sworder *Conscience* seems to have gotten the better in the long battle, for hark to Richard's soul-riven groans :

I shall despair—there is no creature loves me ;
And if I die, no soul will pity me ;
Nay, wherefore should they ? since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself.

So completely has he stopped every sluice of pity for others, that he no longer can shed even a drop of self-pity in his last need. Conscience here turns him under, and the hitherto fearless soldier now confesses openly his new fear, not to himself but to his fellow-soldier Ratcliff, who calls him out of himself :

By the Apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard,
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond !

Still he cannot turn back, having set his life "upon a cast"; soon we catch that last signal of the Demon's despairing energy, though still defiant:

A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!

And so he dies his deathless death, being vitalized anew into eternal life by the art of the poet. With his last breath Richard unhorsed stakes his throne, the grand goal of his ambition, and the hard won fruit of all his crimes, for a charger with which to meet his competitor. But that is the ultimate throw of the world-wagering gambler against Conscience, who is now voiced triumphantly by the triumphing Richmond.

Here we may take a brief side-look at the poet in his factory. He had before him an older play which still exists, entitled *The true Tragedy of Richard the Third*, and which furnished him much material in events, in characters, and even in words for his work. So we may watch him fishing out of the time-stream an abandoned piece of floating wreckage which he takes to his workshop and transfigures to an eternal temple of the Muse. Of this unique power of his let us test one little specimen, only a single line, which in the old play jolts prosily thus:

A horse! a horse! a fresh horse!

Sample now Shakespeare's corresponding line cited above, and feel to the full the difference and then tell it, if you can. Mark well that this most strik-

ing dramatic incident is here handed to him directly, that even the cue in the first words "A horse! a horse!" is shouted at him by the old unknown poet; but now behold the sudden metamorphosis of death-dealing prose into life-giving poetry—the last and topmost utterance of Richard. Yet the old versifier cannot stop here at the grand culmination, he lets his finished Richard babble on in a prolonged dying self-colloquy. But peace be to his nameless ashes, for he gave his old forgotten bones to William Shakespeare who built them into a new body and breathed into it his breath of immortal life.

Such is, in general, the place which we assign to *Richard III* in the evolution of Shakespeare's total Life-drama. It is the bridge from his embryonic dramaturgy to his more fully individualized work, from his Marlowese to his Shakespearese, from his vanishing otherness to his dawning selfness. And the chief spiritual trait which signalizes this transition is his employment of Conscience for his characterisation. Therein he mirrored the spirit of his age, which was becoming more and more inoculated with the authority of Conscience, especially through the incoming religious revival sprung of the Puritans. That Shakespeare shared in this grand renaissance of the time's spirit crops out along the whole line of his plays from beginning to end, from this his early *Richard III*, up to his middle-aged *Hamlet*, and thence onward till the poet's finality in *Tempest*. May we not hear a far-

off echo of Richard's and Clarence's throes of Conscience in the tortures of Alonso (*Tempest* III. 3), whose thunderous words still keep up the massive reverberations first heard in the present drama, which, however, continue rolling through the entire sweep of his active Life-drama for quite a quarter of a century:

O, it is monstrous, monstrous!
Methought, the billows spoke, and told me of it;
The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounc'd
The name of Prosper: it did bass my trespass.
Therefore my son i' the ooze is bedded—

as the penalty of the father's wrongful act. Another instance will not let itself be forgotten here: Conscience functioning through the imagination we have found often at work in *Richard III*; but later in the poet's *Macbeth* it is augmented and intensified till it becomes quite the entire instrumentality of bringing home to the doer his deed of guilt.

Thus we find that *Richard III* not only reaches backward, but also strikes forward, being a sort of prelude or exordium to the grand Shakespearian Pan-drama. It touches certain fundamental notes which we shall often hear in the future. This leading-motive (as we may call it for illustration) of Conscience sounds one chief theme attuning the poet's total achievement from overture to finale. In this single preluding play of *Richard III*, we

may hear the word Conscience voiced some fifteen times, according to our count, not to mention several synonyms which would add at least as many more passages of like meaning to the tally. And I hold it is this special characteristic which gives to the play its enduring interest and popularity. It has something eternally important to tell you every time you hear it or read it, something not merely told for your pleasure, but for your salvation. And also the fact should be noted that *Richard III* must have been a public favorite from its theatrical birthday. The cunning, irresistible, demonic Crookback was one of the sovereign roles of Burbage the actor, as report has transmitted. But more significant is the ocular proof that six separate editions of this play were printed in Quarto before the Folio of 1623, and several afterwards. Thus it rises distinctly out of the theatre into literature, and stays risen, till this moment, when for a little instance you and I are studying its text with fresh zest and insight—I at least after more than sixty years' acquaintance. The bare pyramidal grandeur of Marlowe, on the other hand, has no such hold on the popular heart. Why? I have given my answer to the problem already: the absence of Lady Conscience.

And here we shall set down the small but purposeful item that of the mentioned six separate Quarto editions of the present drama, four on the title-page nyphenate the spelling of the author's name, thus: Shake-speare. A little wink,

to be sure; but it suggests again the warlike spear-shaker now to the eye, which suggestion the poet's contemporary fellow-craftsmen, Spenser, Jonson, Digges, repeat in laudatory verse. But especially for this play such a bellicose hint becomes significant, since Richard is through and through the fighting man, and exhibits strikingly the purely military spirit in its origin and outcome. For war spells destruction, even when used as a temporary means, as at times it has to be. Richard is the war-trained destroyer, from youth up, and the full logical sweep of his career is never to stop till he destroys his enemies, his friends, his kin, and himself. Such is the complete cycle of his character as drawn by the poet.

Had Shakespeare seen anything of the sort in his own experience? Undoubtedly, for England's chief business and pre-occupation for years had been to drill soldiers and sailors to meet the long-threatened Spanish invasion. As before said, Shakespeare could not help participating both in the work and in the spirit of the time, which was essentially militaristic, had to be so. He must have actually witnessed and possibly have served under some captains like Richard, for they never fail to grow in such a crisis. During his several years of Drifting he certainly had the opportunity. So from this point of view, the present drama may be regarded as Shakespeare's study of militarism, how it is like to mould human character, unless there be found some re-agent or corrective. Rich-

ard the soldier has come to think that he can run Conscience through with his sword, and fling it away as the corpse of his adversary. He kills all his own except his own Conscience, which keeps stabbing him till the last thrust.

The opening soliloquy of the play may be regarded as bringing before us Shakespeare himself looking back upon the warlike scenes he has just passed through after the defeat of the Spanish Armada:

Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
Our stern alarums chang'd to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures:
Grim-visag'd War has smooth'd his wrinkled front.

All of which young Shakespeare had very recently experienced, and probably every man in his audience. Do we not to-day (1920) here in America witness similar occurrences at the home-coming of our troops from the war abroad? But what is Richard, who has been fed on soldiering from his babyhood, now to do with himself "in this weak, piping time of peace?" His vocation, his world is gone; and as there is no war on hand, he will start his own personal war, for just that is not merely his business, but his very selfhood, which has become as crooked as his body, and ever more blood-thirsty. Besides, as all these wars of the White and Red Roses during a hundred years have been

waged to seize a throne, he will now begin his own war for that same end. Why not? Hence

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous
By drunken prophecies, libels, dreams—

And so his new battle opens. I believe Shakespeare saw Richard, talked with him, and caught his spirit, which he then threw back more than a hundred years and incarnated in the similar but doubtless more terrible Yorkian time of English history, wherein he found his full freedom of portraiture, since it had been hostile to the present House of Tudor, which could not be so easily shown its right image to its very face.

In this early play we are to note Shakespeare's use of dream-life to let the unconscious underworld of man play into his conscious overworld for the purpose of bringing him to judgment. Hamlet also has "bad dreams", and hesitates to kill himself through fear of "what dreams may come" during that sleep of death. Now in this subliminal dream-life Shakespeare makes Conscience the sovereign, but dethrones her in the supra-liminal waking-life; at least such is Richard's case. His double personality shows itself unconscienced in his outer deed, but conscienced in his inner underself, where is seated his Minos or infernal judge, meting to him with stern compensation the penalty of his conduct.

Over and over again in various forms Richard has reproached Conscience with cowardice, as it

wells up spontaneously from below and halts his action. Such is the plague which pursues him into his last thought, whose words still reveal his deepest conflict, as with self-violence he chokes down his retributive dream-life bursting up inwardly:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe;
Our strong arms be our Conscience, swords our law.

Thus the ghostly sworder Conscience springs forth again as his internal challenger, from whom he rapidly rides away into the thick of his outer fight, which is his last.

That Shakespeare himself experienced some such struggle of Conscience, we firmly believe, for reasons already set forth. Here, however, we would stress another point of much significance in the poet's career: without the psychical habit of Conscience, there could have risen no great modern English drama, no complete characterisation. That inner turn upon the self and the holding it up to its ideal standard give the possibility of the new and deeper character-making in the Shakespearian sense. So our greatest dramatist opens his career with a dramatisation of Conscience, the most distinctive act of his age's soul-life, which now looks inward and develops the self through scrutinizing and representing its weakness and its strength. Conscience is still to-day the first and best char-

acter-builder, the very base of our personality's edifice.

So we conceive the process: in Conscience the individual rounds himself out within himself; he calls himself before his own tribunal, where he is judge, jury, sentencer, and may be executioner. This act the whole nation was performing in Elizabeth's time; every responsive man was looking into his life and making a great fresh readjustment of himself to the moral order of the world. Thus the individual becomes a new spiritual totality in himself, and is set in motion with a new energy, creating for himself also quite another social environment, but especially originating the new drama in which he is to be adequately portrayed. Hence we are to observe that this series of four earliest plays, called sometimes the Yorkian Tetralogy, is of basic importance in the education of Shakespeare unto his supreme self-realisation. The new-born world-man has appeared and is to have his spiritual picture taken in his various relations by the artist who knows him best just through his own experience.

We should here repeat that this rise of Conscience in the English nation is mainly, though not wholly, the work of the Puritans, who after Shakespeare's time will undergo a grand evolution out of and beyond the poet. But of that we need not now speak.

Here then closes what we call the First Epoch of Shakespeare's Apprenticeship, which sets forth his

time of Collaboration, when he was going through the primary school of his art. These were full years for his England, bringing the tension of the Armada crisis and its first reactions. The convulsive age of the Roses gave him a congenial dramatic setting, as well as a political discipline for his coming work. Social revolt also he got to see and to know in his wild fellow-dramatists; still with him it was at present hardly an inner living experience but rather some knowledge won and appropriated on the outside. Possibly he forefelt Marlowe's personal tragedy from the start. At any rate Shakespeare's own tragic world is to come much later.

CHAPTER SECOND.

Imitation—Experiment.

Out of Shakespeare's time of Collaboration we now pass to the second stage of his Apprenticeship which is distinctively his imitative or acquisitive Epoch, for he has discovered what he lacks and at once goes after it. Hence he now seems reaching out and appropriating whatever is needful for his new vocation, which aspires even beyond the drama; we shall behold him in quest of an universal poetic knowledge and practice. Hence this Epoch has the character of a great spiritual expansion, whose push is to transcend former limits.

There is no doubt that his previous state of Collaboration appears to him, looking backward, as a time of unfreedom, pupilage, subservience, perchance necessary for his first dramatic schooling as well as for his bread and butter. But now he feels himself able to begin on his own account and to compose a separate, independent drama or poem; he is to find in himself and to unfold the untrammelled bent of his genius, of which he has become conscious. Already *Richard III* we conceive to have been for him a kind of Declaration of Independence, since this play, in spite of its mighty self-assertion, bears still the traces of an hitherto dominant but now over-borne collaborator. Thus two authors, or their opposite tendencies, fight in it

as well as its two historic protagonists, Richard and Richmond, for sovereignty; and at the close of the combat not Richmond alone is triumphant, but also Shakespeare. His Richard III, though hatched out as his own big chick, still shows pieces of Marlowese egg-shell unshed till the last stroke.

So we may say that the poet and his work become individualized in this present Epoch, though its unfolding by no means reaches yet the highest bloom of his individuality. He is simply passing through another stage in his rise toward complete self-realisation. He is seeking to master and to make-over all the transmitted forms of literature, especially the poetic; he is testing himself, finding himself out, trying his genius on the cultural tradition of the past by imitative reproduction, yet independent. Hence this may also be called his experimental Epoch, for we shall find in it a greater and more varied number of essays in verse than at any other time of his career. He is testing and choosing his implements of poetry, but in such a creative way that his test becomes itself an eternal poem. Daringly he is winning a grand new experience of his art, and therewith the ultimate experience of experimentation itself. Thus we may glimpse him very busy in his present workshop, marking well the transition from his former laboratory in conjunction with others to his present laboratory with and in himself.

But what is the date of this Epoch? Again we have to confess that the time-limits cannot be laid

down to the exact year, though its general outline may be duly calendared. The five or six years which lie between 1589-90 and 1594-5, embrace the labors as well as the unique discipline of the man during the present Epoch. Its essential fact we have sought to designate by several labels—imitative, appropriative, expansive, experimental—indicating the poet in his resolute search for the right path of his Genius.

And now we are brought to grapple with the diversified contents of this Epoch, and, if possible, to arrange them into some kind of transparent order. For we find before us on the surface a recalcitrant mass of multifarious versicles and divers sorts of poetry, which sorely need some method of classification. They all burst up into this Epoch, and show its creative variety as well as its unfettered spontaneity. We have essayed several methods of organizing the rebellious material (which therein reflects somewhat of the poet's own spirit during this time), but at last we have fallen back upon the old and sometimes decried division of poetry into epic, lyric, and dramatic, all which forms we find Shakespeare employing and perchance testing in the course of this Epoch. Accordingly we shall dare cut up Shakespeare's poetic self into three main strands for the purpose of threading the somewhat criss-cross labyrinth of his writings during the present phasis of his evolution. Let, then, these be our larger headings under this *Epoch*:

- I. The Epical Shakespeare.
- II. The Lyrical Shakespeare.
- III. The Dramatic Shakespeare.

We naturally wonder at and inquire about the cause of this sudden expansion of the poet's horizon after his rather limited and concentrated work of dramatic Collaboration. First of all, we have to say that such was the inborn aspiration of the man; such too was the bound-bursting push of this early Epoch of him, exemplified also in his wont-defying master Marlowe. Shakespeare at this point practically said to himself in the words of one of his characters:

Now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in—
whereupon he makes a break over the prison walls of his spirit, and gives a plunge toward his new Epoch.

Moreover the time had taught him that he needed to know and to be something beyond Marlowe, who had the old Latin training but not much of the modern Italian culture, which seemed not to appeal to him victoriously as it did to Shakespeare, wherein the latter shows himself the more universal man. Indeed Marlowe was by nature more Northern than Southern, more Gothic than Classic, in spite of his choice of some Greco-Roman themes. There is little doubt that his *Faustus* was Marlowe's most congenial and typical work, and the one which tapped the deepest and most lasting sources of Teutonic spirit in Europe, as is shown by the con-

tinuous stream of Faust art gushing from this earliest fountain till now, of which the culmination is Goethe's German masterpiece. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been often deemed ultimately cognate with Goethe's *Faust*, especially in that deepest psychological problem of man, the relation of his intellect to his will. A modern German poet (Freiligrath) has entitled his most effective lyric *Germany is Hamlet*, and hence destined to end in the *Hamlet* tragedy. But to-day we hear even more poignantly and profoundly *Germany is Faust*, exemplified in the deeply brooded ever-welling Faust Mythos, which realizes itself so persistently and so variously in the Teutonic folk-lore. Strangely English Marlowe started, not the original tale but the poetic embodiment of it in the prolific time of Queen Elizabeth, and became one of the influences which impelled Goethe to his supreme achievement.

Accordingly we are to see Shakespeare in this Epoch deflecting from the more Northern Marlowe to the Mediterranean world with its melodious sun-beshone art. On the other hand, Shakespeare's new turn of career seems to have made Marlowe bend a little toward the same direction, in what is usually deemed his last poetic upburst, his *Hero and Leander*, left a fragment which seemingly breaks off with his sudden death.

So let the salient fact of this Epoch be now duly signaled: The poet Italianizes, he starts to absorbing the culture of modern Italy, especially in its poetic form. That is, he makes a striking transi-

tion from his old classic training, chiefly won at Stratford, to that of the Italian Renaissance (or Renaissance), into which he finds himself suddenly plunged when he gets settled in London. He observes that his foremost literary associates are more or less imbued with Italian literature, that re-born Italy furnishes largely the time's poetic and especially dramatic material, that the age itself, along with Elizabeth's tone-giving court, is Italianizing. Now we have already detected that Shakespeare is peculiarly sensitive to the great spiritual currents of his environment, and seeks not only to assimilate but also to reproduce them in his art. Hence we have to conceive him pushing at once to appropriate and to imitate that fresh renescent world of Italian spirit, which, we may add, will stay by him and deeply influence the whole sweep of his London Pan-drama, of which the supposed last specimen, *The Tempest*, is still Italianized through and through in locality, in coloring, and in content. So the poet, in this his peculiarly imitative and appropriative Epoch, takes up and recreates in himself that great world-movement which arose and culminated in modern Italy, as it advanced out of the Middle Ages.

Now this is a cardinal and lasting turn in the poet's life and work; hence we feel the right to attempt some construction of it, though it be quite undocumented.

(1) All are agreed that Shakespeare must have read old Chaucer, who is already full of the first

freshest and greatest literary flowering of the Italian Renaissance in Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Thus the Italian movement had been working its way some two centuries in England when it burst up with the grand Elizabethan resurgence to renewed energy, in which Shakespeare profoundly participated. (2) In London there was an Italian cultural circle at whose center stood John (Giovanni) Florio, son of an Italian refugee who was a Waldensian clergyman. Florio wrote an English-Italian manual of instruction and a dictionary, made translations into English, and gave lessons in his native tongue and in French. He enjoyed the friendship of the Earl of Southampton, our poet's noble patron, to whom were dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and also *Lucrece*. Among Florio's pupils we are going to place William Shakespeare, whose aspiration soon bred the resolve to learn Italian and then to pay a visit to Italy itself, at that time the grand magnet of all educated travelers, especially the English. (3) The poet's London environment overflowed with translations, adaptations, imitations from the Italian, of which he must have caught and assimilated the spiritual quintessence. The air was full of Italy's poetic forms, especially sonnets, novels, romantic narrative poems, (epopees). One of these Elizabethan translations, Fairfax's Tasso (printed in 1600) has shown itself enduring till to-day; Shakespeare may have read some of it in manuscript. *But altogether* the supreme, the immortal per-

formance of this Italianizing time is Spenser's *Fairy Queen* (first three books published in 1590) whose influence wrought very decisively upon the outreaching Shakespeare at the start of the present Epoch.

But the happy-making incident as well as the most profound and lasting experience of this Epoch is the poet's visit to Italy, which has been placed somewhere about 1592-3 when the theatres were closed on account of the plague, and Shakespeare was free of business to take a trip abroad as well to escape from the death-stricken London. His intimate knowledge of the cities of Northern Italy (though he makes mistakes, as do well-prepared guide-books and even the Italians themselves) indicates eye-sight's own inspection; but the main proof for us is the poetic atmosphere which we feel in his Venice and in his Verona, and which the poet recreates out of what he has immediately sensed and inwardly experienced on the spot, not out of what he may have heard or read. Of course this Shakespearian visit to Italy has been stoutly contested, since there is for it no straight-out documentary script. Naturally the rather thick-skinned biographer Sir Sidney Lee scouts it, affirming that the poet's Italian scenes "lack the intimate detail which would attest a first-hand experience of the country." But Shakespeare's reproduction of Italy shows something far deeper and subtler than the "intimate detail" of particulars, though he knows many of these too. Hence telling such an opinion,

Sir Sidney Lee has told more truth about himself than about Shakespeare. In his biographic books he has gathered an enormous concourse of facts, for which we certainly should be grateful; and in gratitude his readers may well crown him the champion biographic rag-picker of the world, even if he seems unable to sew his tatters into a whole garment. And such whole garment should also reveal somewhat of the soul which throbs the same out of itself into life's external habiliments.

Accordingly we shall not only accept as a fact, but also as a significant turning-point in the development as well as in the writ of Shakespeare, his visit to Italy. Though neither the poet nor anybody else has left any direct account of it, still its effect can be felt underlying a large list of his productions. We hold that it meant as much, yea more to Shakespeare than Goethe's pivotal Italian Journey nearly two hundred years later did to the great German poet, who, however, has recorded fully the meaning of Italy in his life and work, whence may come help to us for understanding his English poetical brother.

Another event which must have produced a strong impression upon Shakespeare was the violent death of his *alter ego*, unbridled Kit Marlowe, who was slain in a quarrel over a dubious female at Deptford near London, May 1593. It is likely that Shakespeare had returned from Italy at this time. Still wherever he was, he could not help seeing Marlowe's tragic nemesis realized in the

outcome of the man himself. The critic Francis Meres in 1598 states that "Christopher Marlowe was stabbed to death by a bawdy serving-man, a rival of his in his lewd love." The Puritan Vaughn in 1600 pointed still more sharply the poet's self-returning nemesis in the barbed phrase that "Marlowe's very dagger was thrust back into his own eye" by his assailant so that his brain oozed out and he died. Thus Marlowe's cotemporaries conceived and wrote down his tragic retribution, probably with a justice fabulously poetic. Still the fact of his violent death in which the catastrophic woman was involved, is generally accepted. So Marlowe also (like Shakespeare) had his Dark Lady, who, however, rapidly haled him to his fate.

Did Shakespeare ever give due poetic recognition of what Marlowe had been to him in the development of his genius? I think to find in his Sonnets many traces of grateful though veiled homage to his master. Thus I construe the warmly conceived eulogy in Sonnet 78:

So oft I have invok'd thee for my Muse
 And found such fair assistance in my verse,
 As every alien pen hath ^{or had} got my use
 And under thee their poesy ^{is not} disperse.
 Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to
 sing ^{and o}
 And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
 Have added feathers to the learned's wing

And given grace a double majesty.
*Yet be most proud of that which I compile
Whose influence is thine and born of thee;—*
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
And arts with thy sweet graces gracèd be;
But thou art all my art, and dost advance
As high as learning my rude ignorance.

Who is this addressee "thou"? Many conjectures we read—a woman, a man, the poet's own genius, even some abstraction. But to our mind this sonnet intimates in a number of ways Shakespeare's strong regard for and deep mental indebtedness both to the learning and the poetry of Marlowe, though the latter be unnamed. Indeed it suggests Marlowe's high place in the poetic firmament of the time, his influence upon other poets and specially upon Shakespeare. If I mistake not, there is a feeling of personal gratitude which warms this little poem in spite of its puns, as if coming from the heart of the pupil to his loved master.

Recurring now to the fore-mentioned divisions of this widely expansive and experimental Epoch, in which we find Shakespeare, still young, imitating all the transmitted forms of poetry (epical, lyrical, dramatic) we shall make a start with the first. Taking the historic development of Greek Literature as the earliest and most natural growth of poetry hitherto known, we find that the Homeric Epos is the grand overture which is followed by the multitudinous Lyrists of Greece, to whom suc-

ceeds the Drama, specially the Attic, headed by superb old Aeschylus. It is significant to note that from this point of view we witness the poet Shakespeare evolving along the lines of his race's poetic evolution, and repeating individually in himself the universal genesis of Literature, according to its primal creative example. Moreover Shakespeare taps that antique Hellenic fountain, inasmuch as he was probably not very learned in Greek, through Latin, Italian, and English conduits, each of which has its own distinct coloring and elaboration of the original material. Hence the chief interest now is to watch our poet going back to and drinking of the very creation of poetry, insofar as this has been put into the form of Letters.

I.

The Epical Shakespeare.

Not a great national spontaneous Epos like Homer's twinned masterpiece; not a vast supra-mundane action like Milton's; not a somewhat artificial and imitated yet gloriously poetical structure with a profound world-historical outlook, like Virgil's and Tasso's deathless poems;—these epical experiments of Shakespeare (for such they must be finally considered), are relatively small affairs, confining themselves mostly to one sexed human couple with their varied interactions of sensuous love. Rather must we go back to Italian Ariosto and perchance Boiardo to find their form-giving

first source, though they shun the Carolingian and the Arthurian medieval Mythos for their story, which they in two cases take from the Classic world. Here, then, we may behold the poet Italianizing himself in meter, rhyme, stanza, theme (as love), and more subtly in poetic atmosphere. Still he gives at the same time a strong interfusion of English landscape and character, while sea-souled, aggressive England cannot help showing herself in the very wave-roll and sledge-stroke of her language.

Three narrative poems of the earlier Shakespeare, but finished after his Italian experience, we set down under the above caption, putting thus together one phase of his imitative, far-extended testing of himself for his future poetic career. These three poems are found in his works under the names of (1) *Venus and Adonis*, (2) *Lucrece*, (3) *A Lover's Complaint*. They are essentially of one class, simple, idyllic, amatory, for which our name would be the Idyllic Epopee.

To be kept well in memory and to be strongly emphasized is the prime fact, that a woman stands at the center of all three poems, of course differently characterized and with her own separate conflict. So they conjointly reveal the poet again making the woman the pivot of his poesy, as she lay in the heart of his experience past and present, at Stratford and at London.

All three show the new ambition of the young poet, and reveal his limit-transcending aspiration.

He now is seen branching off to a fresh domain of his poetic art, testing his rather callow wings in a foreign far-away flight. The three poems, though cast into one general mould, and imbreathed with one basic spirit, can be seen to represent three different stages of the epical Shakespeare, till he rounds out this unique experience and rises above it to the next higher. So let us scan the poet as he makes trial of that new poetic form here called the Idyllic Epopee.

1. *Venus and Adonis*. Such was the title of Shakespeare's first printed book, which was authorized by himself and published under his name given in a dedication but not on the title page. It was entered in the Stationers' Register April 1593, and then issued to the world with a Latin motto taken from Ovid, in which the poet claims to turn away from the taste of the populace (this is supposed to be a side-glance at the stage of the time), so that henceforth he will quaff only Castaly's pure inspiration. Thus Shakespeare seems disguisedly to hint a new turn in his poetic vocation aside from the drama—he is making a fresh experiment with his Genius.

The same fact is at least hinted in the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* to a noble patron, the Earl of Southampton. And if this "first heir of my invention" finds the favor which he hopes with the lordly aristocrat, "I vow to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honored you with some graver labor." Here is evidently some grand poetical plan

touched upon; possibly the forthcoming *Lucrece* is the allusion, but more probable is it that the loftier design of a great national Epos was floating before the poet's imagination, roused perhaps by rivalry with Spenser's *Fairy Queen*. But if this present work "prove deformed", then I shall "never after ear so barren a land", in which statement seems to lurk a wee premonitory doubt concerning this new poetic tendency. At any rate we may here see Shakespeare looking away from his more plebeian dramatic career to an aristocratic patronage, which at the time could only be reached through the Italian vogue then at its height.

Can we catch some faint glimpse of the poet's spiritual phasis at this moment? He had, we may conjecture, returned recently from his trip to Italy, and was full of its influence. We have timed that trip about 1592-3. And his poetic creativity, we may well believe, could not have lain idle under such a stimulating environment. He was still in his freshest genetic years, twenty eight or nine of age, and could not help poetizing. Why should he not take some of his unfinished work along with him, as did his poetic world-brother Goethe many decades afterwards, who wrought over, remodeled, and versified his *Iphigenia* and his *Tasso* in the beautiful Southern sunland of genius. Now we are going to think or dream (if one wishes to say so) that Shakespeare carried with him to Italy his *Venus and Adonis*, which he revised and perhaps rewrote in the delicious but languorous Italian

clime, for that is the unique atmosphere of the aforesaid poem. When he came back to England, full of his new poesy, he applied to an old friend, Richard Field formerly of Stratford, but now a London printer and successful bookseller, to publish his latest, and in his view, finest production, under the highest possible auspices, a great Earl's patronage. Moreover this first edition of *Venus and Adonis* shows at all points special care in its typographical execution; only one copy of it exists (in the Bodleian), which, however, is declared by the competent to be the best printed book among the original editions of Shakespeare, who doubtless now read his own proof-sheets. Here it may be jotted down by the way that Shakespeare's frequent employment of printing processes in his writings has led to the supposition that when he first came to London, he worked for a while with printer Field, his fellow-townsmen and family friend. In a few weeks the alert youth could have learned to pick type and handle a press, as many another has done since. But his stay, if it ever took place, could not have been long: he had a different bee buzzing in his brain.

The poet's early favorite, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, furnishes the story and the motive, though not the verse and the poetic atmosphere; these have been imparted by the Italian Renaissance to Shakespeare, who breathes into such transmitted material his own poetic individuality, as this manifests itself in his adolescence. Of course for the origin of the

tale of *Venus and Adonis* we have to go back to all-creative, embryonic Hellas, whose pastoral poets, notably Theocritus and Bion, made use of it, and from these the Roman poets caught it up, and scattered it throughout cultured Europe. Ovid's tale of the wooing of the unwilling Hermaphroditus by the love-shent maiden Salmacis (Book IV. *Metamorphoses*) is the chief source, though other passages contribute. Thus we observe the poet to seize an universal Mythus first bubbling up in antique Greece, and then streaming down through Rome into the nascent and modern world, along with the flow of civilisation itself.

The psychical characteristic of the poem is the soul's appealing resignation to sensuous passion on part of the woman (or goddess), while the youthful object of it resists. A personal experience we may again glimpse in these warm prolonged love-harangues; Anne Hathaway will keep flitting through the shape and the hot implorations of Venus. Another Stratford impress is everywhere stamped upon the poem: the rural scenery, the description of tame and wild animals, the country sports and occupations, as well as the ready agricultural lore.

But when we come to sip of the verse, we find it to taste of Italy; the meter, the rhyme, the stanza, the aroma are Italianized. The poet's own contemporaries seem especially to have caught this dulcet poetic melody, which attuned the ear of the time to its luscious tingle of tones. The critic Francis

Meres, doubtless acquainted with Shakespeare personally, celebrates *Venus and Adonis* by name, precluding that "the sweet and witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare"—a warble of words worthy of the singer himself. And the little rhymester Richard Barnfield (1598) put to the fore the same quality: Shakespeare's "honey-flowing vein." For this same reason *Venus and Adonis* shows a deep spiritual and poetical kinship with *Romeo and Juliet*, the sweet and sometimes saccharine Italian love-tragedy of the still youthful poet.

The chief objection to this delicious bit of love's ecstasy will always be its unmorality; not a few good people will strengthen the word to immorality. The work may be termed Shakespeare's Art of Love, in which he follows perchance a little too exuberantly his classic mentor, lascivious Ovid. It is the very riot of erotic adolescence; we feel that the poet uses the shy Adonis as a foil for the amorous raptures of Venus, who really voices the young Shakespeare in his unbridled sensuous mood. Possibly here, too, lurks some secret rivalry with Marlowe, who also has turned away for a time from the drama and started to writing a love-idyl, his *Hero and Leander*, which is found inserted in the Stationers' Register not far from the date of *Venus and Adonis*. Moreover, the effect of a visit to Italy in exciting an erotic overflow of verse may be remarked even of the middle-aged, well-balanced Goethe, especially in his love-drunk *Roman Elegies*.

Hard upon the appearance of *Venus and Adonis* followed the cataclysmic tragedy of Marlowe himself, which sent a life-determining shock into Shakespeare's very being, since he now feels the warning in his own case, and at once proceeds to set forth in writ Love's fate, for the sake of his own salvation. Let us never forget that his literary utterance is propelled from his deepest experience, and becomes his soul's confession and absolution. Within a year he has completed his *Lucrece*, or the nemesis of Love's native urge, which work is not without its remedial word for the poet's own inner restoration from his previous excess.

We should not fail to note that before the conclusion we hear even in voluptuous *Venus and Adonis* the sharp admonition against the lurking peril (line 793)

Call it not Love, for Love to heaven is fled,
 Since sweating Lust on earth usurped his name,
 Under whose simple semblance he has fed
 Upon fresh beauty blotting it with blame . . .
 Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies,
 Love is all truth, Lust full of forged lies.

These lines might be prefixed as a motto to the coming poem of *Lucrece*, whose moralizing character they foreshow, and whose diabolic incarnation of Lust (in Tarquin) they almost prophesy.

2. *Lucrece*. May 9th 1594 there was entered in the Stationers' Register "A Book entitled the Ravishment of Lucrece", and soon afterwards it was

published under the simple name "Lucrece", though the running title on the top of the page gave the fuller "Rape of Lucrece". Thus in about one year and one month after the registration of *Venus and Adonis*, appears this new, and longer and more elaborate poem of Shakespeare, who writes in front of it a second dedication to his noble patron, the Earl of Southampton, rather more fulsome than the first, which was not lacking in that attribute. But this is the poet's last known dedication, and his indulgent reader feels amply satisfied with these two samples.

The poem gives some signs of haste, and of being written under a single continuous inspiration; thus on the whole its spiritual unity is more pronounced than that of *Venus and Adonis*. Still it has expansion overfull, but turned inwardly and subjective rather than outwardly descriptive of natural objects. Very little of the Stratford landscape one finds here, thus it contrasts in local color with the previous poem, which is so panoramic in scenery. Both are equally diffuse, though in opposite directions.

But it is the moral difference between these twin productions, which becomes still more striking and profound than the physical. Indeed *Lucrece* is not only the counterpart but the counterstroke to *Venus and Adonis*. The two women perform opposite female functions: Venus is the woman as sensuous temptress of man, Lucrece is the woman as the moral censorsess of man, here tragic and so

the more impressive. Both these feminine contraries became well-known to Shakespeare through immediate experience, and both he will employ hereafter, in comedy as well as in tragedy. Let the reader himself name the poet's two probable models taken from the Shakespearian household at Stratford.

The story of *Lucrece* is uniquely Roman, which the school-boy poet could find in his Ovid and in the historian Livy. From these ancient writers it has been transmitted into the world's literature of all ages. In England before Shakespeare Chaucer had poetized it, and other authors had given to it manifold literary forms. So the theme had won a universality like that of Rome itself. In fact these two female images, the Goddess Venus and the mortal Lucrece, may be said to represent Greece and Rome respectively in their different characters: that sensuous Greek harmony between man and nature is divine—Venus; while that stern Roman virtue—Lucrece—which subjects nature to itself, especially its own, will in the end subdue Hellas and her beautiful Gods along with the whole world. Thus the poet here projects into persons the two diverse souls of the antique classic world, from which he has derived his earliest culture already at Stratford.

Again town-friend Richard Field was his printer, and published *Lucrece*, though Field seems soon to have transferred his Shakespearian copyrights, probably for a good price. *Venus and Adonis* was

peculiarly popular, as if the day's best seller, six editions being called for in ten years; *Lucrece* did not sell so well by any means, as twenty-two years passed before the fifth edition came out. Possibly this fact had some influence upon the poet's cessation of his epical stream—he having felt now his public's pulse, and having found his own limits. There is no doubt, however, that Shakespeare first became a famous author through his very successful *Venus and Adonis*, whose general trend indeed mirrors the time's mood. Still the poet could hardly help feeling that such an Italianizing epical turn was not his true and eternal call, nor his people's right utterance, being rather a transitory freak of the folk, an imitated un-English thing, not England's enduring spirit embodied in an enduring form. So we may conceive him now looking out upon his new future.

We are made to feel in *Lucrece* the Roman tendency to the abstract, if we compare it with the Hellenic concreteness which dominates *Venus and Adonis*. The superabundant Roman gift of osseous personification is duly exemplified in the addresses to Opportunity, to Time, to Night, and to other skeleton figures, which are made to rattle their bones in a kind of death's dance. But the most elaborate Roman decoration is the painting or pictured panorama which shows the destruction of Troy, with the sinister image of perjured Sinon, evidently derived from Virgil. The parallel between the Rape of Helen and the Rape of Lucrece

is not neglected; each has its fatal personal as well as political consequences; and each heroine, the Greek and the Roman, represents her country's ideal. This long episode of Troy's fall is a little epos in itself, and seems here an insertion from some other work or plan of the poet, which may well reach back to Stratford when he read the Aeneid under master Simon Hunt, who would surely take the time to amplify the story to his enthusiastic and promising pupil. Here, however, it is duly Italianized in meter, strophe, and rhyme, and in tongueyness.

Still despite these boyhood reminiscences in the poem, they are all transformed and made to cluster around the form and deed of the lust-driven Tarquin, who seems the least ancient, most real person of the action, and evidently is the direct source of the composition, whose first and freshest part tells of him and of his conflict both inner and outer. For conscience is here reproaching him as it did Richard III, and we are again told its name and its battle:

Thus graceless holds he disputation
'Tween frozen conscience and hot-burning will,
And with good thoughts makes dispensation
Urging the worsen sense for vantage still.

In fact we hear more than one soliloquy of Tarquin which recalls the Mephistophelian defiance of Richard III, though without the self-caricaturing irony which the latter sprays over himself so gen-

erously. For instance take this meditation of Tarquin upon his deed's consequence (1. 488) :

I have debated even in my soul
What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I
shall breed ;
But nothing can affection's course control,
Or stop the headlong fury of his speed ;
I know repentant tears ensue the deed,
Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity ;
Yet strive I to embrace my infamy.

A decided streak of Richard Crookback lurks in this verse, though his diabolism was ambition, not salacity. And we shall repeat that we cannot help seeing Marlowe's own figure often metamorphose into that of Tarquin doing the fatal deed of lust, with the retributive backstroke of nemesis common to both. Such (we think) was the living reality which first drove the poet to seize and elaborate the present theme.

This is the only poem of Shakespeare which bears the sole name of a woman as the heroine. Not a drama of his gets its title from its female character, though she be often the foremost personage of the play. Whenever the woman appears in the caption, she is coupled with the man; Lucrece is the one exception. But now the poet is to bring before us in a new piece his third epical woman, so we may call her at least for the nonce.

3. *A Lover's Complaint*. First let it be explained that this lover is not a male but a female,

a sad young maid who speaks her girlhood's deepest agony through love's betrayal. The present poem was first printed in 1609 with the Sonnets, which it follows as a kind of Appendix. Thus it has the same external evidence for its authenticity as the Sonnets, and with some of them, but not with all, it shows a certain affinity in content, style, and mood. Of course its Shakespearian origin has been often challenged, but on grounds purely subjective and insufficient, as we regard the matter.

In its general theme as well as in its poetic form it attaches itself to the two preceding poems, of which epical group it may accordingly be set down as the third member. It gives another phase of Shakespeare's treatment of love, especially of the woman now overborne by this passion, which also involves the man as her sexed counterpart. In the present poem we hear the oft-told story of the blooming adolescent girl with her first resistance to her youth's natural urge, then her gradual yielding till final submission. Somehow in her unhappy words we are fain to catch a far-off echo of Ophelia's lament:

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched
That sucked the honey of his music vows.

There can be no doubt concerning the numerous defects of the poem. Not only is the subject along with its treatment hackneyed, though ever renewable in the human heart, but also it shows itself quite everywhere a sketch as well as a fragment.

Underneath all the supposed lapses of the printer, we can see that its language needs to be thoroughly overhauled and clarified, as if it were only a first rough draught. Then it breaks off in the middle, without any right conclusion. The betrayer does not get back his own, after the usual Shakespearian poetic justice. At the beginning there seems to be preparation for a long poem: two characters are introduced with some detail—the secret onlooking listener “I”, and the “reverend man” who is seated at the maiden’s side listening in complete silence to her doleful story—both of whom thenceforth are dropped without a word. Sketchy and fragmentary is the production, though that is no reason for taking it away from Shakespeare, who has left many other sketches and fragments even in the middle of his better dramas. He is often incomplete as well as careless, possibly through haste; he does not always finish, he has his torsos like Michelangelo, like Goethe. Now these torsos are specially interesting and suggestive to the student of his spiritual evolution. The imperfect sketch may show the artist struggling in his workshop, which biographic revelation the perfect work tends to eliminate or smooth away.

Such a Shakespearian torso is to our mind this vaguely named piece *A Lover’s Complaint*, supplying a link, undoubtedly a small one but real, in the chain of the poet’s development. About 1609, (or perhaps somewhat before) Thomas Thorpe a well-known publisher of the time got hold of Shake-

speare's Sonnets along with this poem, both in manuscript doubtless. Now we dare conjecture that the poet himself turned these loose pieces of writing over to a publisher whom he knew, and who would issue them to the public for what they were worth. On the whole, they were things which the author had outgrown; he had quit sonneting by 1609, and the present rhymed and stanzaed epopee in Italian style belonged to an earlier phase of his growth, some fifteen years back, say about 1594, year of *Lucrece's* birth. So runs our construction of this undocumented time, an imaginary biography, as such rehabilitation of lost parts of life has been scoffingly scored. Sir Sidney Lee in this connection affirms (*Life of Shakespeare* p. 161, new edition) that "Shakespeare, except in the case of his two narrative poems made no effort to publish any of his works", a statement wholly unproved and as purely conjectural as any so-called imaginary biography. Very unlikely too is such a feeling of indifference toward the printed page in the psychology of authorship, as Sir Sidney might discover by his own example. The unbiased reader can detect Shakespeare carefully looking after the publication of several of his dramas, especially the greatest one, that second Quarto of *Hamlet*. And what is more natural or even praiseworthy? Consequently we shall conceive William Shakespeare, then thinking soon to quit London and to retire to Stratford, as he one day gathers up his old transcended papers of life's experience, and hands

them over to publisher Thorpe, who grasps the prize and in his dedication gratefully acclaims the author "as our ever-living poet." Bravo for enthusiastic Thorpe with his little snatch of prophecy, even if it be also publishing puffery. Moreover this laudation would seem to indicate that Shakespeare was on good terms with his publisher, who could hardly have gotten and printed the manuscript in any clandestine way, its writer being in the city and well-known.

Another noteworthy item about *A Lover's Complaint* should be taken to mind: it employs no Greek Mythus (like *Venus and Adonis*,) no Roman Tale (like *Lucrece*) for its scaffolding, but it introduces its one main character telling her own story directly in person. From this angle of view it resembles the modern Novel or Short Story more closely than the old myth-borne poetry, and in spirit it is more lyrical than epical, though it retains the form—meter, stanza, rhyme—of the Shakespearian epopee. Hence it is to be classed with the latter, though we feel in it a transition out of that stage of the poet. We may also observe that Shakespeare is getting more interested in the psychology than in the mere story of his personages; he is turning to inner portraiture, and paying less regard to incident; so we can forecast his final absorption in the characterful new drama as his most adequate expression. Indeed he carries his self-analysis here too far, and becomes diffuse and wearisome; he needs the stage to put the curb on

his riotous fancy as well as on his long-winded subjectivity, which in fact overflows to excess all his epical experiments. We may think that he discovers this excess himself, and so breaks off in the middle of his last piece for good. He will write no more epopees, he has tested and appropriated their value for his complete evolution. His pen, if not restrained by the outer action of the theatre, runs away with his own genius, which he has found to be dramatic to the core.

4. *Retrospect.* Such is the epical Shakespeare with his three Idyllic Epopees, as we have labeled, perhaps with some audacity, the man and a special phase of his work at this time, which is, in general, his imitative, experimental, appropriative Epoch. He visits Italy and Italianizes his creative power in a number of ways. This experience remains a permanent factor in his life and achievement; we shall note an Italian strand woven through his entire Pan-drama to its last example. Even in his language we find him conjoining Northern strength with Southern sweetness, blending the open, vowelled flow of Italy's speech with the less fluid consonantal tongue of Teutonic England. Moreover that Mediterranean culture, the original fountain-head and millennial preserver and propagator of European civilisation, he would know, realize in himself, and transmute into his own productivity. Of this considerable discipline of the poet, the three foregoing Epopees form a very significant stadium. They may also be regarded as showing Shake-

speare's early exercise in word-gymnastics; he often riots in verbal expression simply for its own sweet sake; we may catch him caressing if not actually kissing his own dear vocables, or at least making them kiss one another in rhyme, assonance, and alliteration.

Three women are found at the heart of the three poems, and show three attitudes toward love which is the central theme of each—the woman tempting, the woman resisting, the woman yielding. The poet was evidently working through in himself the sex-experience of his time, indeed of his race. All three women are disillusioned, disappointed, unhappy in the outcome—a decided contrast to Shakespeare's treatment of his female characters in his forthcoming comedies. Perhaps here we may find another reason why he drops his epical experiment.

One result is certain: after this Second Epoch of his Apprenticeship, which concludes about 1595-6, he devoted himself to the drama more intently and exclusively than ever, as if he had found the right vehicle of his genius. We may well seek in his poems, for we have no other data, to visualize this epochal change, or return to the theatre from these idyllic tales of love. A few grounds for such a change we may set down. (1) It is likely that he found that his special patron Southampton and probably his patronage generally preferred his plays, and with good reason. (2) The drama was native, English, not an exotic, not Italian, and had thus a far deeper appeal to the age and to the poet's

folk, and also to the poet himself ultimately. (3) Moreover he discovers that he can take up into his dramas the Italian element of the Renaissance, making it a vital part of his total dramatic organism. Thus he renders his productivity universal, causing it to embrace both Northern and Southern Europe with their respective world-views and literatures. Here may be witnessed the grand coming universality of Shakespeare, who has sought not only to conjoin externally but to make intergrow into one ideal poetic body those ever-fighting entities, Roma and Teutonia, who have just finished the bloodiest, and possibly the fatalest of their duels, in the so-called world-war; which duels have been recurring off and on for the last two thousand years between the same combatants. Shakespeare, the mediating poet, has at least ideally harmonized the all-devouring contradiction which seems to be ever yawning in the European folk-soul between Teutonism and Latinism.

Now this doubleness and indeed antagonism of the Teutonic and the Romanic lurks deeply in England's spirit, being voiced primarily by her double yet integrated language, which is composed of those two originally hostile elements usually called Anglo-Saxon and Latin. But this linguistic and spiritual dualism finds its supreme reconciliation realized in the speech and art of Shakespeare, whose book, therefore, becomes an image, and we may hope, a prophecy of the final peace of Europe. Thus our mediatorial poet prefigures not only in

the content of his words but in their very form and composition, a unified and pacified world which may yet conclude to talk also a unified and pacified speech, namely English.

Still further, through this excursion abroad in distant and alien fields Shakespeare is brought to discern the true scope of his genius, which he now recognizes to lie fully in the drama. He was astray and in doubt for several years, but just through his wandering he has discovered himself and also his world. Often he has expressed this idea of a return and recovery of himself after a time of inner estrangement:

If I have ranged,
Like him that travels, I return again
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged—
So that myself bring water for my stain.

Thus he celebrates his self-healing power over his spiritual scission and aberration, employing the first person, the subject, the Self in its own right (Sonnet 109). But this introduces us to a new kind of Shakespearian expression, not epical, not dramatic, but lyrical, of which the poet has not failed to furnish to us his distinctive contribution. Accordingly it is our next duty to take a glimpse of him from such a different viewpoint.

II.

The Lyrical Shakespeare.

The name suggests primarily the singer with his lyre giving expression to his immediate feelings and

experiences in harmonized speech. Accordingly the Self or Ego of the poet becomes the center of utterance in one form or other. Thus Lyricism in its genesis and prime significance we stress as subjective, dealing with the manifold upbursts of the individual subject in joy and sorrow, in love with its rises and falls, in life and in death. The lyricist has to catch in the musical word the first gush of man's ever-seething emotional underworld, and then to sing it attuned to his instrument. This basic character of Lyricism will remain amid all its thousandfold diversities both of form and content. For the lyrical consciousness is on the whole separative, particularized, atomic.

Shakespeare as the universal poet must be also lyrical, weaving such a poetic strand throughout his entire work, as a necessary element of his genius. He is likewise subject, an Ego, creatively and colossally individualized just in his universality. Hence we are to observe his outward epical narrative breaking up into little lyrical bits of inward experience.

But before we go into the details of this phase of his creativity, we are to recognize that Lyricism of itself forms a world-historical stage in the race's literary evolution. Such a stage is most clearly manifested in antique, little, but always embryonic Hellas, which shows the one vast Homeric Epos gradually with time separating itself into numberless distinct lyrics whose multitudinous singers included both sexes, for the woman is peculiarly sub-

jective, and by nature is inclined to express herself lyrically. Accordingly we read of that early Greek songstress Corinna of Tanagra who won the lyric prize over greatest Pindar five times according to tradition. But far more enduring in fame and loftier in genius looms up the ancient Lesbian poetess Sappho, whose delicious tidbits of love-verse to her Phaon are still read with responsive thrills, being translated into all tongues, and reproduced with many variations around the globe to-day. Still it will have to be confessed that a man, Pindar of Thebes, remains the culmination of this lyrical period of Greek Literature. In his strains we may conceive the epical Gods of Homer, once speaking from high Olympus, to descend below into the terrestrial man himself and thus to become lyrical, singing through mortal voice their immortal decrees.

But the relevant fact for us is that our Shakespeare, in his poetic development, repeats or rather reproduces that of Hellas, the original spiritual prototype of all Europe; his individual evolution re-enacts the universal evolution of Poetry itself. No wonder that deepest instinct of his from youth onwards sought to imitate and thus to appropriate the creative process of Classic Literature as the very aliment of his productivity. It should here be added that the Greek poetic soul, like Shakespeare's own soul, found its complete final realisation in the drama.

The lyrical strand is seen weaving through

Shakespeare's entire career, in various forms; it must have started with his boyhood at Stratford, it may be traced bubbling up everywhere in his London Pan-drama, and it could hardly have quit him in his last retirement at Stratford. Naturally during his Italian time it Italianized with all the rest of him; that is, we may catch him testing upon his genius the lyrical forms of modern Italy, one of which, the Sonnet he seizes and makes his own in his own way forever.

Another point may be here underscored: the Lyricism of Shakespeare especially in the form of the Sonnet, becomes the poet's autobiography poetically expressed. For the lyrical consciousness utters immediately its own subjective experiences as they gush up from the depths into brief jets of emotional and imaginative speech. Hence Shakespeare has written the poetical diary of his life, which is naturally the lyrical, the internally personal side of his verse, as it sprays out of his experienced underworld into warm iridescent drops of self-expression whose content is chiefly love.

One result of such a scattered, broken, desultory writ is that it can have little structural unity, such as we find in the Epos and in the Drama. Lyricism knows not the grand architectonic of poetry, and so rears no supreme temple of art, but remains more or less a pile of beautifully carved stones, at best a tray of diamonds.

I. PLAY LYRICS. Imbedded in the dramatic movement are various lyrical forms which seem

spontaneously to spring out of the artistic organism to the surface. Especially the brief folk-songs throb forth a heart-felt popular note, which also hints the character and the situation. What can give a deeper glimpse into the soul of the betrayed Mariana (Fourth Act of *Measure for Measure*) than the one verse suddenly attuned:

Take, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn;
But my kisses bring again, bring again,
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain, seal'd
in vain.

Thus in a large number of Shakespeare's dramas lyrical strains, rhymed and sung, break unforcedly into the spoken blank-verse and prose. It seems as if the whole drama had a soul which insisted in certain crises of itself upon a quick musical utterance for its right relief. So we may conceive Shakespeare himself in his work often to start instinctively to singing out his melodious genius. Some people like these little lyrical jets from his far-down emotional underself better than any other part of the poet.

Then again certain speeches in blank-verse take a lyrical tone and swing native to their content. For instance Mercutio's description of Queen Mab and her fabled doings seem a chanted strain of fantasies inserted into the action from the outside.

Indeed the whole play of *Romeo and Juliet* shows an incessant struggle or rivalry between the lyrical and the dramatic for the poetic prize, with the result of making them both equal victors. In this early tragedy we find many lines externally attuned by end-rhymes; but the best unrhymed passages have likewise a musical undertone crooning a soft rhythmic accompaniment. Some comedies, especially the imaginative *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Tempest*, are pervaded with the very soul of harmony which keeps overflowing into song, and makes them more lyrical than dramatic. Especially their supernatural beings, fairies and spirits, are endowed with a unique gift of supernatural word-music which we may hear best in the strains of Puck and Ariel. To our feeling this Ariel-song warbles the deepest note as well as hints the creative germ of the whole poem:

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made,
Those are pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong—
Hark! now I hear them—Ding-dong, bell.

The grand transfiguration of man's earthly passing into his eternal portion is here voiced in words that sing their own tune as it were from above.

And the thrilled reader fails not to think of the poet himself, the magical transfigurer who has overmade his own fading life and world into a fadeless "something rich and strange" which we still contemplate. In this little song, probably one of his last, singing out of his last play, the lyrical Shakespeare reaches his highest point, and hymns a glimpse from the top of his Pisgah across the border into his future fulfilment.

Besides these songs other lyrical forms can be dug out of the rich soil of Shakespeare's dramas—such as the ballad, the epigram, the proverb, even the jingling doggerel. But of such fitful, mostly fragmentary ripples of his Lyricism we can here take no account.

II. MISCELLANEOUS POEMS. Shakespeare has left us a few separate bits of verse which may in general be classed as his poetic miscellanies, in contrast with the foregoing lyrics intergrown with his dramas, and hardly separable from their context without some violence. Under this head we may begin with a small collection of poems which bears the title of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, mostly though not wholly composed of little whiffs of that well-known passion called love, twenty one of them (in my edition), not very ardent or deep or prolonged. The book was first published in 1599, with the name of W. Shakespeare as author on the title-page, but it contains pieces by other poets. Indeed the best thing in the collection is by Marlowe, beginning "Love with me and be my love"—an ex-

quisite lyric which keeps the name of Marlowe popularly alive and known to-day more than do all his dramas, being found in every good anthology. A scrappy book of poetry of diverse quality, content, form and authorship is this *Passionate Pilgrim*: who put it together, and how did that old printer get it? A question insoluble now, though provocative of much erudition and speculation as well as of some editorial hebetude.

So much, however, we know: several of Shakespeare's own sonnets are inserted here, for they are found also in his other works. But the most interesting Shakespearian fact in the whole scrapbook is that four pieces (Nos. 4, 6, 9, 11,) in sonnet form take up and work over phases of the fable of Venus and Adonis after a somewhat tentative fashion, as if the young author might be testing himself on his material. The most natural conclusion (as Malone long ago suggested) is that these four sonnets are preliminary studies for the poet's *Venus and Adonis*, and might have been already conceived if not made at Stratford, since of the scenery and experiences of his home-town *Venus and Adonis* is everywhere redolent. If this be so, Shakespeare took an early start at sonneting, in fact some years before he went to Italy, for which it was a kind of overturing incentive and preparation.

It should be added that the foregoing views run counter to the general trend of criticism upon this curious little Shakespearian scrapbook. Some

writers deny Shakespeare's authorship of these four sonnets altogether, others assign to him a part of them—and so on. Swinburne with his accustomed dogmatic violence damns the whole work as "a rag-picker's bag of stolen goods", angrily shouting that the thing is purely a bookseller's piracy after the fact, and hence can contain no preparatory sketches of the self-testing young poet.

For our part, we think we find still other indications, though more veiled, that *The Passionate Pilgrim* was a kind of publishing outlet for Shakespeare's early experiments in verse, when their climacteric had passed off in 1599, and when he could look back at a stage of his transcended Self. Besides the four mentioned sonnets, which deal by name with the subject of *Venus and Adonis*, we count five short poems employing the same form and meter which distinguishes that poem—namely its rhymed pentametral six-lined stanza, along with its general literary tone. Let the reader peruse together these five brief snatches of rhyme (Nos. 7, 10, 13, 14, 15,)—he will often be reminded of the style and mood of *Venus and Adonis*. Hence these five rather broken shapes of versicles we would construe as *paralipomena* to the poet's larger work, being excluded probably for the sake of a closer unity and harmony. In fact a careful scrutiny will suggest the reason why the poet in his final revision resolved to cut out such inconsistent if not refractory passages. Of course these five pieces have been taken away wholly or in part from Shakespeare by

the critic, who has never yet seen their true poetic place in the poet's total evolution. For instance our big brother biographer, Sir Sidney Lee, learnedly but rather blindly suggests that "they are from Barnfield's pen", an obscure weak goose-quill of that Elizabethan time. (As to the fact of *paralipomena* or well-composed verses left out or excided by a great poet in final revision, let the inquisitive reader compare those of Goethe's *Faust*. These have also been translated by Bayard Taylor. Note too that such scattered omissions were afterwards collected and printed in the doubtless parallel case of Goethe.)

Another very unique poem which we place under the head of these Shakespearian miscellanies, is that baffling fantasia called *The Phoenix and the Turtle* with thirteen rhymed stanzas of four lines each, followed by the *Threnos* or funereal song with five stanzas of three rhymed lines each. Thus the poem, though of two distinct parts, is of short compass, but solitary in its species among the works of Shakespeare, who, however, can be detected singing kindred strains under other metered disguises, especially in his Sonnets.

This poem was first printed in a new sample of poetical scrapbook (evidently a fashion of the time) which is dated 1601, hence two years after the preceding miscellany. The title runs in part: "Love's Martyr or Rosaline's Complaint, allegorically shadowing the truth of love, in the constant fate of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*", with other here

omissible tags of information. The collection is made up of "diverse poetical essays", nameless and named, one of which is the above poem subscribed with the name of William Shakespeare. Such is the external evidence of its authenticity, which in general has been accepted, though sometimes challenged on grounds more or less subjective.

Concerning this to our mind prophetic poem, *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, we may first jot down what to us stands out as its most peculiar and stunning characteristic: Shakespeare writes here an Emersonian lyric more than two centuries before the birth of Emerson, whose turn of thought and use of the English word often recall the Elizabethan stylists. For example those two birds, the one fabled and the other real, the Phoenix and the Turtle,

lov'd, as love in twain

Had the essence but in one;
Two distincts, division none:—
Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
Distance, and no space was seen—.

So Shakespeare had his transcendental mood, or perchance epoch in Old England without waiting for New England whose Concord poet sings a concordant strain in his Brahma:

Far or forgot to me is near,
Shadow and sunlight are the same,
The vanished gods to me appear,
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out,
 When me they fly, I am the wings;
 I am the doubter and the doubt—.

Thus the dualism of the whole finite world vanishes like the Hindoo Maya into the absolute One. Shakespeare has the same movement, but confines it to love: he makes the two lovers (as birds) lose their twoness in the one essence of love by death, and he spins in the process some of his finest metaphysical gossamers, hardly visible unless seen across the sunlight from the heights:

Single nature's double name
 Neither two nor one was call'd—
 Reason, in itself confounded,
 Saw division grow together;
 To themselves yet either neither,
 Simple were so well compounded—.

Here the term *reason* seems to mean the Kantian *understanding*, and the passage calls up one of the deepest-searching discussions sprung of modern German Philosophy, which may be stated very simply thus: what is the difference between Reason (Vernunft) and Understanding (Verstand)? We can find Emerson wrestling with the same problem, which probably came to him from the Germans through Carlyle. Goethe also had his repeated tussle with the same subtle distinction, in spite of his professed dislike of philosophy.

Since the original title states the purport of the

book as "allegorically shadowing the truth of love" in the fate of the two birds, not a few commentators have been enticed to explain the seemingly confessed allegory. Grosart, for instance, maintains that it shadows the love of Queen Elizabeth (celebrated by her poets as the virginal Phoenix) for the Earl of Essex, who was her turtle-dove. But such a theory breaks down at essential joints. Shakespeare's poem through all its gauzy cloud-land lets us see distinctly the tragedy of love in both male and female, which he had already set forth on the stage to the senses in *Romeo and Juliet*, who also like the two birds may be taken as "co-supremes and stars of love." Moreover this book bears the date of 1601, which is about the time when Shakespeare enters upon his topmost Tragic Period, during which he writes his great tragedies, starting probably with his early *Hamlet*, as seen in its first Quarto. This deeply brooded bird-fantasia may well indicate his melancholy presentiment of what is in store for him, as well as mirror his pensive reminiscence of the "pair of star-crossed lovers" *Romeo and Juliet*, verily his youthful tragedy of the *Turtle and the Phoenix*, for

Death is now the Phoenix' nest,
And the Turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,
Leaving no posterity.
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was marred chastity.

Similar far-flung idealisms, demanding the keenest mentality of the reader, we find strown through the poet's Sonnets, seemingly at random, for example in Sonnet 105 :

Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
 Therefore my verse to constancy confin'd,
 One thing expressing, leaves out difference.

Here again he gives us a glimpse of that "constant love" which is above all difference and which, he says, is the theme of his verse.

Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
 Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words,
 And in this change is my invention spent,
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope
 affords.

In these lines the poet starts to Platonizing as he often does in the Sonnets, which are shot through with Plato's famous trinity: the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. At this point we also come upon the main subject of the *Threnos* whose first verse wails thus :

Beauty, Truth and Rarity,
 Here inclos'd in cinders lie.

Such is Shakespeare's tragedy of the Phoenix and the Turtle, wondrously transcendental. (If the reader is jarred by that third vocable *Rarity*, as I am, let him substitute for it Purity, or even Char-

ity, which may well stand for *kind* or *good*).

The Arabian Phoenix is a many-centuried fable, reaching back to old Herodotus, and floating down the ages in hundreds of allusions and poems. It was a favorite with Shakespeare; he probably first became acquainted with it in his classical school at Stratford. At any rate he employs it in his earliest drama, *Henry VI, Part I.* (Act IV. sc. 7)

But from their ashes shall be rear'd
A Phoenix that shall make all France afeard.

And in his last drama, *The Tempest* (Act III, sc. 3) he gives to the wonderful story a fuller and finer turn:

Now I will believe
That there are unicorns; that in Arabia
There is one tree, the Phoenix' throne; one
Phoenix
At this hour reigning there.

Somewhere about midway between these his two extreme productions may be timed the preceding mystical notes of the Phoenix and the Turtle, as if chanting out of the poet's heart-depths a back-look and a forelook over his entire London Pan-drama. The theme is the unity of two souls in one all-consuming love, which has often been sung in very diverse modes, whereof we may cite these two deep-toned throbs from a German lyricist:

Zwei Seelen und ein Gedanke,
Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag.

It is a noteworthy fact that the poetic transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson selected just this most transcendental poem of Shakespeare for his interpretation as well as for his warm approval. Says he, in the preface to his *Anthology* (Parnassus 1875): "It would appear to be a lament on the death of a poet and of his poetic mistress. But the poem is so quaint, and charming in diction, tone, and allusions, and in its perfect meter and harmony, that I would gladly have the fullest illustration yet attainable. I consider this piece a good example of the rule that there is a poetry for bards proper as well as a poetry for the world of readers." Thus Emerson seems to be letting out some heart-words in regard to his own peculiar poetry, and with stronger emphasis he clinches his last point: "This poem, if published for the first time and without a known author's name, would find no general reception. Only the poets would save it." Moreover Emerson in the same enthusiastic paragraph proposes that there should be offered "a prize for an essay on Shakespeare's poem", dealing with its historical, literary, and spiritual interpretation. Possibly such an essay lurks still somewhere in the unpublished Emersonian archives.

Thus our American Emerson, having originally set up his own Sphinx at the portal of his poetic temple (see his *Poems*, first edition) here glorifies Shakespeare's riddling Sphinx, modestly couching in the heart or at least in the middle of the latter's full-flowing dramatic career. One thinks that

Emerson in his soul's secret preference must have regarded *The Phoenix and the Turtle* as the best thing in all Shakespeare, though he does not say so. At any rate we catch out of it a strain in the total Shakespearian psychology usually neglected, indeed usually unintelligible, namely, the poet's supersensuous, idealistic, transcendental vein which forms such a world-wide contrast with his vivid sensuous presentations on the stage. The same conclusion whispers us in an undertone out of Emerson's essay on Shakespeare in his *Representative Men*, which, however, contains one of the briefly best, most prophetic, most creative sentences ever written on the bard of Avon: "Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare."

III. THE SONNETS. Here we reach decidedly the poetic culmination of the lyrical Shakespeare, who is now seen far surpassing, in literary power and intense self-expression, his epical work, and even rivaling his dramatic genius on certain lines. More deeply lyrical are these Sonnets than any other phase of his lyricism; they reveal the poet's subjectivity in all its waywardness and steadfastness, in its great littleness and in its little greatness, mirroring his individuality's microcosm as well as his universality's macrocosm.

Accordingly the reader will do well to note at the start that the Shakespearian I or Ego is the center from which radiate all these little flashes of poems. The hero of this sonneted Odyssey of the poet's inner life is himself, or rather his Self,

chanting his own soul's wanderings, as he composes his London Pan-drama, the greatest book of World-Literature. Thus we catch in the total sweep of these 154 singing atoms a subtle heroic tinge, somewhat Ulyssean, though the adventures over these stormy seas and sunny islets be wholly internal and lyrical. We hear the poet reproaching himself for this one-sided occupation with his own Ego, which he brands as "the sin of self-love" when he is at his spirit's contrite confessional, where we often find him in these Sonnets. Take for example number 62:

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
And all my soul and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account,
And for myself mine own worth do define,
As I all other in all worths surmount.

Here is certainly a huge ground-swell of self-appreciation on the part of William Shakespeare, quite equal to the world-embracing enthusiasm over him in these days of ours. This grandiose Ego of the poet will "define its own worth for itself", and declares itself to "surmount all other (poets, men) in all worths." Who, after such an upburst of self-recognition can repeat the commonplace untruth that Shakespeare never knew his own great-

ness? Still he fails not to give himself the counterstroke of age in the same Sonnet:

But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
Beaten and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
Self so self-loving were iniquity.

This is quite another Self from that first one, now old, ugly, unlovely, which he beholds in his glass outer and inner—his Ego being by nature thus self-seeing, indeed doubly self-seeing. But this is not the end of the subtle psychology of the present Sonnet, since a new person or at least a new personal pronoun enters the process, namely “*thee* I myself praise for myself”, whereupon follows a fresh higher uplift. Or, to cite the two final subtly worded and even more subtly thoughted lines:

’Tis thee (myself) that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

Who or what is this marvelous *thee* that has the magic power of transmuting “my age” old and ugly, as it is, into “the beauty of thy days” in the poet’s song of praise?

The question calls up one of the central difficulties in the interpretation of the Sonnets. To identify the foregoing *thee* with some man or woman or thing or idea has been the main business of the army of expositors. Somehow a noun, proper or common, has to be found for that pronoun, else the commentator must shut his shop.

Leaving aside such a pursuit at present, which is likely again to prove fruitless, as it has a hundred times already, we may observe in the preceding Sonnet three psychical stages of the poet's inner experience or of his Ego: (1) excessive self-satisfaction, (2) excessive self-dissatisfaction, (3) self-restoration through "painting my age with thy beauty"—evidently his own poetic act, which thus keeps rejuvenating the old poet.

Having such an example before us, we may next proceed to state a determining characteristic which runs through this entire collection of Sonnets. Under a variety of pronouns (I, thou, he, she, it, and their derivatives) Shakespeare hides the names of the persons addressed or involved; he refuses to betray individuals under their own designation. I believe he did so on purpose; he would compel us to look away from the particular person to what is generically true. Significantly he employs no proper nouns, but only their pronouns, signs universal for the special appellatives. Even his own identity he couches in the one letter *I*, using a few times one little bit of his cognomen, *Will*, which, however, he shadows darkly with its ambiguous pun. Evidently he wishes no personal identification; he writes these brief musings to be read by his private friends (like Francis Meres) as his heart's confidences about himself, his vocation, his conflicts, outer and inner, and most deeply his world-view, for we shall often find him here philosophizing in thought's profoundest vein, and talking his woe's

own medicine: "Adversity's sweet milk, Philosophy."

Hence from this point of view we may characterize these Sonnets as pronominal, emphasizing the pronoun instead of the noun, substituting the general for the special. Such is the one chief disguise or poetic subterfuge—the pronoun masks the noun. Mark the contrast with the named personages of his dramas, perhaps a thousand titles down to the little page, and sometimes voiceless in a dumb-show. What bearing has this fact upon the desperate modern attempt to re-name (or re-noun) the poet's pronouns, calling them Southampton, Pembroke, and many other appellations concrete and abstract? Such seems to be the coming question in this matter.

One name, however, will insist upon rising, though never articulated throughout the whole course of these Sonnets: Marlowe. Often the reference to him is decided, often barely perceptible. But Shakespeare never did or could throw off the influence of that Promethean genius who shaped him at the formative beginning of his career. One may frequently hear the poet paying unconscious tribute to his early master rather than to his supposed noble patrons. A woman also has woven herself organically into the living tissue of these poems, the so-called Dark Lady. Her identification has not been fully proved, nor by any means disproved; so she hovers dimly but daringly, and will continue to hover as the shadowy *Mary Fitton*.

Shakespeare's real Cleopatra playing her part in his inner Life-drama.

Another much-discussed problem in reference to these Sonnets is the date of their composition. Let us at once state our view: they are the poet's intimate diary for some twenty years or more—from his start with Marlowe (possibly a couple of them may reach back to Stratford) till their publication in 1609. Hence beneath all of Shakespeare's Periods underlie the Sonnets, and even his Epochs we can discern in their mirror reflecting the stages of his whole poetic evolution. To be sure, in this central stream is mingled much material more or less foreign, which perturbs and deflects the reader's mind. Still the autobiographic undertow is felt in it everywhere, and is to be brought to the surface.

Shakespeare's form of the Sonnet is an adaptation from the Italian, which, though he did not originate it, he brought to its acme. Doubtless the most prolific time of his sonneting was his Italianizing Epoch already described. As far as known, Marlowe would not take to the Sonnet, and hence did not follow Shakespeare on this line. The small atomic quatorzain (as it is technically called) Marlowe the Titan seemingly disdained as too petty and too crushed for the huge outreach of his genius. Shakespeare on the contrary loved it, developed it, and caressed it as the dear momentary relief of his tumultuous, ever-passioning heart-world.

In the dedication of the edition of 1609 occur

these words: "To the only begetter of the ensuing Sonnets, Mr. W. H." This little phrase has turned out a huge nest of riddles, on which the guessers are still busily at work. Who is this Mr. W. H.? These two simple initials, handed down to posterity by publisher Thomas Thorpe, have been as prolific of conjecture as Shakespeare's own masquerade of pronouns all through the mazy dance of the Sonnets. More than a dozen candidates for this emptied name W. H. have been suggested with much display of learning and ingenuity, which up to date seems about the only result. Then that oracular locution, "the only begetter", is capable of at least three different meanings in Elizabethan English, each of which finds hot upholders. Our not very ardent view is that "the begetter" here means not the getter merely, nor yet the outside inspirer, but the actual creator, who is rightly "the only begetter" of these poems. And into this maelstrom of whirling guesses we would fling our own little surmise, already pre-empted by some Shakespearians, that W. H. is an uncorrected misprint for W. S., namely William Shakespeare, who in the title of the book is practically declared to be its only true begetter. Thus the whole trouble has been caused by the printer who otherwise has shown himself very fallible throughout the text of this edition, which also seems to have been ushered into the world quite proof-readerless. But enough of these infinitesimal side-issues.

That which for us remains the quintessential

fact of this diary of Sonnet-gushes is that it images in the inner life of the poet the three supreme Periods of his evolution. They show him in his younger buoyant years, in his middle-aged tragic intensity, and in his final turn to a repentant spirit along with its reconciliation inner and outer. All three leading stages of Shakespeare's personal development can be traced in these poetically concentrated outpourings of his heart and head. Only through intense and prolonged communings with these intimate confessions of himself to himself, can we hope to be admitted to the real presence of the man. For these Sonnets, as they stand numbered in print, form by no means a consecutive well-ordered whole; though we may detect some regular sequences, shorter and longer, as a mass they reveal no general principle of arrangement, except the diarial. Moreover it belongs to such a moody, motleyed, scattered journal, that it contains many jottings at random.

Still within and through all this heterogeneous medley are reflected the capital nodes of the poet's life, which are seen also in his dramas. Accordingly we shall cite a few passages from the Sonnets illustrating the three already described Periods of his London Pan-drama.

I. There is little doubt that the larger portion of Shakespeare's Sonnets were written during the Period which we have called his Apprenticeship—on the whole his happy, hopeful, buoyant years antedating his great tragedies. This was likewise

the time of his most diversified and prolific authorship. Frequently his earlier dramas take a turn to the Sonnet especially during his Italianizing mood; in fact *Love's Labor's Lost* shows a kind of contest for the mastery between the Drama and the Sonnet. As an illustration of his present happy atunement and exalted self-appreciation, we may cite the following example (No. 55.)

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall
burn

The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth: your praise shall still find
room,
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.

But here again the pronominal problem rises: Who, what is this *you*? Instead of such a disguising substitute, let us have his, her or its noun which somehow is hidden in or under that pronoun, so demands the prying commentator. But in whatever way one may shape the answer, the poet has abundantly told on himself, has given clearest utterance to his faith in his own genius,

which after all may be just the entity addressed here, inspiring "the living record of your memory". At any rate, there is one wholly undisguised, very positive statement: the poet's exalted affirmation of his own poetic immortality, defying "death and all-oblivious enmity."

II. Undoubtedly during this buoyant time he has his spasms of melancholy when he sees dark, though he recovers. But there is in these Sonnets a persistently tragic group, though not always clustered together in successive numbers. To the vanishing side of existence we hear him give full stress; especially does he celebrate the negative might of Time as the all-devouring deity like old Greek Cronus:

Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminatē,
 That Time will come and take my love away;
 This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
 But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Here mournfully we are attuned to a tragic sequence of Ruin, Time, Death—a right gloomy set for the poet's meditation (No. 64.)

It has often been remarked that one of these Sonnets (No. 66) is an emphatic echo of the Hamlet tragedy, especially of its central utterance, the soliloquy on Death. The opening line strikes the tragic tone of the poet's Second Period:

Tir'd with all these, for restful Death I cry,
 whereupon he recounts with pessimistic bitterness

the time's hopeless degeneracy, so that we can hear the poet intoning the psychical parallel:

To be or not to be, that is the question.

Thus the present Sonnet offers a date, if not exactly one of time, at least one of spirit, for the poet's inner response to his Tragic Period. Into what deepest depths he must have sunk while writing his Tragedies, we are made to feel when we read the following (No. 71)

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the sullen surly bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell.
O, if, I say, you look upon this verse
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
But let your love even with my life decay.

Such is now the note of the poet's mortality in deepest contrast to the note of the poet's immortality heard in the Sonnet previously cited (No. 55). But with the years, some seven or eight of them as we make the tally, this world-destroying tragic mood will finally get relief through Shakespeare's mightiest self-expression, and a calmer strain of reconciliation will begin to be heard in certain Sonnets, which change undoubtedly springs from another nodal experience of his life.

III. Accordingly we are now to catch a new music of return and restoration to fresh hope and

faith in himself, as well as to a revival of his youthful poetic ambition and of his lofty self-appreciation. He has been in eclipse; behold him coming out of it (No. 107) :

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd
 And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
 Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
 And peace proclaims olives of endless sage.
 Now, with the drops of this most balmy time
 My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes,
 Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes:
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
 When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are
 spent.

A vast amount of local and cotemporary history has been crushed into this Sonnet, with great increase of its "incertainties." And that uncertain ever-shifting pronoun *thou* again appears with its marvelous polymorphism. Still there is one unflinching certainty uttered here: it is the poet's own restored and reconciled mood in thought, style, and theme. There may have been an external historic peace, or an external physical eclipse of the moon alluded to above—who knows? But the fact of Shakespeare's own return of peace, and of the passing of his eclipse is throbbled from every word. And that must have been his main object, namely his self-expression as the last need of his being. Moreover let us mark that Death no longer tri-

him, as in the foregoing tragic time, subscribes (submits) to me", who am conqueror. Such is the deepest note of the Period not only in the poet's dramas, but in the poet himself, who utters his triumphant deliverance in that pivotal Sonnet (46) when he says:

Death thou feed on Death that feeds on men,
 Death once dead, there's no more dying
 then.

They take these two lines as the reconciled out-
 come and redemptive finale of the poet's Sonnets,
 Dramas, and of his life. More subtly turned
 thought and phrase, it recalls a like-minded but
 more emotionalized and higher-pitched passage in
 her more authoritative book: "O Death, where
 thy sting! O Grave where is thy victory!"

What may be called the psychology of the Son-
 nets remains to be written. Their reader is already
 inclined to turn away from the fruitless search and
 re-search after the identification of their darkly
 veiled pronouns and of the dubious initials (Mr.
 W. H.). But there is one personality of whom some
 attribute or mood is recounted in nearly every
 Sonnet: this is I, Ego, Self, Shakespeare, who is
 here at his confessional telling his joys and sorrows,
 his sins of omission and commission, with contri-
 tion, repentance, and absolution through his self-
 expression. In his Sonnets, then, we have his dis-
 tinctive psychological record of himself by himself,

of course in concretely poetic, not in abstractly scientific form.

Finally we are to note that in these separate bits of poems lurks a drama, indeed several acts or stages of a many-tentacled drama, which here remains as it were implicit, conceived but not yet born into dramatic utterance and structure. The poet or his *I* (Ego) is the central character, round whom play his man and his woman, his dear male friend on the one side, and on the other his dearer fascinating conqueress known as the Dark Lady. But of this ever-budding yet never-flowering dramatic embryo in the Sonnets we can here give no account, though of much value and interest; the Shakespearian drama as unfolded and realized in this Second Epoch rises now before us, to which we must next pass.

III.

The Dramatic Shakespeare.

As already recorded, Shakespeare has harvested one considerable dramatic experience, which we have set forth as his Collaborative Epoch, the time of his four (or possibly six) so-called but not well-called Yorkian plays, which embrace all of his *Henry VI* and his *Richard III*. But now we again take up his dramaturgy, as it shows itself during this Second Epoch when he expands from the one concentrated point in many directions, imitating, experimenting, appropriating. In this time of out-

reaching aspiration, having traced his epical and lyrical strands, we shall next follow his dramatic development, which runs quite parallel to the two mentioned lines throughout the present Epoch.

Now his dramas as a whole during this time will show the same diversified, searchful, imitative character, which has been already emphasized. That is, as his yearning sought an universal poetic culture, embracing the three grand divisions of all poetry, epical, lyrical, and dramatic, so now the third one of these divisions, the drama, he will essay in its three leading transmitted forms, which were known to him as Comedy, History, Tragedy. (The reader can see these three divisions boldly capitalized, as if from the mind if not from the hand of the author himself, in the Table of Contents to the First Folio; also they are mentioned in *Hamlet*).

So it comes that into this Epoch of about six years we intend to place seven early Shakespearian dramas, not now collaborated but independent, stamped with the poet's individual genius, yet bearing decided marks of the aforetime which his evolution has just passed through. Of course there always has been and still is a question about the dates of these plays singly taken; into such a discussion, however, we shall very sparingly enter. But there is a pretty fair agreement even among the special date-excavators that the said seven dramas fall somewhere within the sexennial Epoch 1589-1595—which time-limits are sufficiently exact for our present survey.

Still there is one important chronological line which we shall draw through these seven dramas, dividing them into those written before and those written after the poet's Italian experience. Somewhere about the middle of this Epoch (1592-3), Shakespeare made his visit to Italy, and the immediate impress of that land of art and literature can be felt and seen in the works composed under its spell. Already we have traced the distinctive Italian influence in the epical and in the lyrical Shakespeare; but now we are to mark even more decisively in the dramatic Shakespeare the import of renescent Italy which he saw still in its realized glory, though this was declining toward sunset. It is not too much to say that the Italian Renaissance had through Shakespeare a unique Northern rebirth, which still helps to keep it present and active in the soul of the ages. He made it an integral part of himself forever, nestling it in the very heart of his creative energy, as we see even in his latest plays.

Accordingly we shall find the poet variously testing his powers first in three pre-Italian dramas, one comedy (*Errors*), one tragedy (*Titus Andronicus*), and one history (*King John*). Later we shall observe him under the Italian enchantment producing still in this Epoch four dramas—one tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet*), one history (*Richard II*), and at least two comedies (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*) and (*Love's Labor's Lost*). Thus we note him essaying every species of drama to discover the

true orbit of his genius—his peculiar business during the present Epoch. Moreover we catch him trying and appropriating the chief transmitted dramatic norms of the historic past—old Roman, renescent Italian, modern English.

It is, therefore, our task now to watch the supreme dramatic genius practising and mastering the three main kinds of drama—Tragedy, History, and Comedy—of each of which he produces a pre-Italian and an Italian or Italianized example. Mark well, he is still acquiring and perfecting his vocation, whose final goal is his completely fulfilled self-expression, his poetic self-realisation.

I. TRAGEDIES OF THE PRESENT EPOCH. As already indicated, we place under the foregoing head the pre-Italian *Titus Andronicus* and the deeply Italianized *Romeo and Juliet*, since the contrast between them in regard to the point we are emphasizing, is most manifest and coercive. The one is old Roman (Senecan) in subject, style, characters and cruelties, seemingly a good deal of a reminder of the youth's classical studies at Stratford, interlarded as it is with Latin quotation and allusion. But the second tragedy is the very bloom and fragrance of modern fresh-flowering Italy, which Shakespeare must have smelt, seen, and assimilated, so we think, from the soil itself. For there is a vast difference between the two dramas, not only in the outer environment, but in the very soul; what is the cause? A great new personal experience of the poet we say—namely the immediately sensed

and assimilated Italy. Then the first drama is by far a more remote, external imitation than the second, which, however, with all its telling originality, is still a derivative.

It should be added that both these plays are listed as Tragedies in the First Folio, the best and most authentic voucher there is for the author's own classification of the Shakespearian Pan-drama. And the following fact also would seem to have its meaning: in that same First Folio both are placed together, side by side; that is, *Titus Andronicus* stands just before *Romeo and Juliet*, as if the twain might have been coupled together in the poet's mind when he looked back upon his work from his retreat at Stratford. Perhaps only an accident; still an accident sometimes has its pointer. At any rate we intend to follow the First Folio in putting the two together in their likeness and unlikeness, as deeply illustrative of Shakespeare's growth during this Epoch.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

"O, horrible, O horrible, most horrible!" Such is the shivering shriek sent up at the mention of this play from nearly the entire host of English commentators, echoed of course by our American parrots, till the scream of horror belts the globe along with the name of William Shakespeare himself. In subserviency to this fearsome far-flung vociferation, the present drama has been very gen-

erally dammed as not of Shakespeare at all, sometimes with a good deal of esthetic unction. Cries Henry Hallam, the much-lauded judicially minded critic and historian, *res ipsa vociferatur* against the authenticity of this work. But we have to think that Hallam himself is the real vociferator along with his horrified horde of fellow-shriekers, starting very faintly from old Ravenscroft's dubious whisperings more than two centuries ago, but long after the poet's demise.

And now let it be fully acknowledged and emphasized that *Titus Andronicus* reeks with horribilities curiously diversified, but never lacking in carnage and nerve-testing barbarities. Meanwhile, however, we should not forget that *King Lear* indulges in the same sort of horrific variety of death, and that *Hamlet* all through from the very start to the last line is seasoned with an abounding condiment of poisonings and of blood-lettings, but on account of this nobody has yet proposed to eliminate the melancholy Dane's life-drama from the poet's canon. Accordingly murder must be accepted as a genuine Shakespearian asset—murder bloody, cruel, of many ingenious variations. And to-day we are not lacking in a like but grander example. Death, even violent death, we have been compelled to witness as spectators, perhaps unwilling, with the whole earth as the stage, during the recent war (1914-8). Far world-wider, more sanguinary and tiger-hearted has been this butchery than that of petty *Titus Andronicus*, which thus we

may deem to have just now received a fresh confirmation and commentary written by old Time himself. Accordingly we have above cited, as good Shakespearian authority for this play's horrors, the grewsome exclamation of the murdered Hamlet's ghost to his son :

O, horrible, O horrible, most horrible!
Murder most foul as in the best it is,
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

The first point which should be now seized upon by the deeper and stronger-nerved student is just that old World-War which lies everywhere in the background of *Titus Andronicus*—the conflict between the barbarians of the North, here represented by the Goths, and the Roman Empire with its civilized institutions, manners, and laws. Such is the contrast often marked in respect of the two colliding elements of the play, as we may catch in the line: "Thou art a Roman, be not barbarous." Then the Queen of the Goths is thus labeled: "Barbarous Tamora, for no name fits thy nature but thine own." Thus the dramatic action is placed right in the cataclysm of ancient civilization, when the latter was being broken up by Teutonic barbarism. The young poet has seized and portrayed this theme as his own time's and his own self's—Elizabeth's England was rocked with the throes of some such convulsion, as well as Shakespeare in person.

The victorious Roman general Titus Andronicus

has been called by the Senate "from weary wars against the barbarous Goths", of whom the Queen Tamora with her three sons appears on the scene, all being captives of Rome. The eldest of these royal Gothic sons is seized and savagely immolated "to appease their groaning shadows that are gone", which shadows are those of the twenty-one war-slain Roman sons of Andronicus, who still has four others living and here present along with one daughter Lavinia. Such is the play's opening deed of blood, which the Gothic Queen and her sons in their turn proceed to avenge by slaying the brother and two of the remaining sons of Titus, and by horribly mutilating and ravishing the daughter. This calls up in requital the drama's third grand vengeance, that of Titus, who seeks to equal the preceding horror by cutting the throats of the two remaining sons of the Gothic Queen, and serving up their cooked heads as a Thyestean banquet to their mother. The furious Nemesis of the play is let loose for the fourth time, and sweeps off the stage the Gothic Queen Tamora herself, the Roman general Titus Andronicus himself, along with the Emperor Saturninus in hideous rapid butchery, while the infernal Moorish villain, Aaron, the black devil of the action, is buried alive. Such is the feast of horrors, not all of them, but the main dishes.

Is our poet the author of it—wholly, partially, or not at all? Many shades of opinion we shall find if we range the commentators. It is an early, if not

his earliest work, we hold; but a genuine, nay an indispensable part of his total Life-drama. We see here the boy, natural lover of things horrible; does he not to-day delight in stories of murder and bloody adventure—Bluebeard, Rinaldo Rinaldini, Jesse James, the Missouri brigands? And the newspaper—has it not its daily grist of assassination, rapine, pistolades of all sizes, often tricked out in lengthy lurid imagery? Young Shakespeare, like you, had also his sensational day, and he, the born creator, threw it out of himself into his native art-form, the dramatic. Whereof we have here his chief, but not his only specimen. A link in the chain of his spirit's evolution we would lose if we left out his *Titus Andronicus*.

Of course it is not possible to give the exact date of this play; it competes for the place of being Shakespeare's very first independent production at least with two if not three other dramas, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Love's Labor's Lost*, and even *Richard III*. It is easily conceivable that all of them may have been carried on for a time together; an author usually puts to mental soak several contemporaneous sketches of planned works, elaborating and finishing them according to inner mood and outer call or opportunity. Ben Jonson who knew Shakespeare well and his dramatic history, in a passage belonging to 1614, dates *Titus Andronicus* back some "twenty-five or thirty years", which statement times the play's origin somewhere in our poet's era of drifting (1584-5 to 1588-9). Another

hint of its date we may hear in its evident allusion to Marlowe's *Tamburlane*, staged in 1587-8, whose hero is the great barbaric Scythian conqueror of the Orient, when a Goth, himself a barbarian, exclaims: "Was ever Scythia half so barbarous" as this civilized Rome? (I, 1, 131). Whereupon the Gothic reply follows: "Oppose (compare) not Scythia to ambitious Rome", for the latter employs really the more savagery.

In fact there is a distinct kinship between Marlowe's *Tamburlane* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in theme, in style, in ruthlessness. Both poets were born in the same year, though Marlowe shot ahead of Shakespeare in the rapid maturity of his genius, and hence became the teacher and early master. Both were appreciative friends and co-workers, and both partook of the time's furious protest against tradition, as well as of its grand literary upburst, especially in the drama. Their two mentioned plays have fundamentally the same subject: the conflict between Barbarism and Civilisation, though the one dramatist takes the Orient for his scene and the other prefers Rome. On the whole, Marlowe makes the Barbarians conquer, while Shakespeare through all his bloodshed preserves the Roman State and with it the movement of the World's History by crowning a new emperor at the murderous finale. Still in both we may feel the youthful revolt against the existing transmitted order; through both runs an undertone of challenge to the accepted civilized society.

Another characteristic of the present play is its pervading atmosphere of reminiscence, which recalls the school-boy Shakespeare at Stratford in his classical studies. Crumbs of Latin as well as Latinisms often drop here from his ready tongue; he is overflowing with incidents and tales from the Roman poets, Virgil, Horace, especially Ovid, and most especially from the latter's *Metamorphoses*, already designated as a kind of literary bible for the youth as well as for the time's Renaissance. Indeed we seem to be able to pick out of that manifold story-book the very tale which wrought the strongest fascination upon the boy William Shakespeare: it is the revolting legend of Philomela whose tongue was cut out to prevent her telling her wrongs after being ravished by King Pandion of Thebes. This monstrous myth drives through the entire action of *Titus Andronicus*, and constitutes one of its leading motives, mirroring the fate of Lavinia, daughter of Titus, and portraying the top-most horror of the whole horrible drama. Some half a dozen recurrences of it therein I have counted, and I am led to think that it was just this tale working in the imagination of the young dramatist, which gathered round itself as the original germ the other uncanny materials of this work, most of them seemingly fabricated by the boy himself from his readings in Roman poetry and history. For here he appears to dramatize in his own way all the Latin of his Stratford schooling. And the stranger fact is that this tale of terror never

quit him in all his life, but haunted still his aged genius: whereof we may cull an example from *Cymbeline* (II. 2. 46), one of his latest creations:

. . . She (Imogen) hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus: here the leaf's turned down
Where Philomel gave up—

perchance in the poet's own copy of the *Metamorphoses*, and the very book which his mother once presented him (we dare again imagine), inasmuch as a boy here in the drama (IV. 1. 42), young Lucius, asserts with heartfelt reminiscence

'Tis Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,
My mother gave it me—

So we may recall the one tenderest domestic islet in this ocean of blood.

What a weird uncanny fascination such a desperate myth seemed to wield over the young and the old Shakespeare! How may we account for it? Did he think, as he sat in the nearby Arden wood of an evening, to hear in the sad notes of the nightingale, who was the transformed Philomela, the inarticulate voice of his own tragic soul longing for musical utterance, and prelude the strain of his deepest genius hereafter to be unfolded into his full-worded greatness? We may be able to hearken the young poet communing with his Muse under the guise of his favorite song-bird (*Two Gentlemen of Verona* V. 4.4.):

Here can I sit alone, unseen of any,
And to the nightingale's complaining notes
Tune my distresses and record my woes.
O thou that dost inhabit in my breast,
Leave not the mansion so long tenantless—

Such experiences he could have had only in his country-home at Stratford, where he as school-boy read the tale of Philomel, and listened to the song of the nightingale, forefeeling his own deeper call. Moreover he strews through this play incidents of the whole history of Rome, republican, imperial, medieval. For instance he introduces the Republic's great struggle between plebeians and patricians, as well as custome and works belonging to papal Rome. Full of anachronisms runs the stream, and we say let them run. Still the action hovers about one great historic event: the conflict of the Roman Empire with the outlying Barbarians. But the special history of Titus Andronicus, as here employed, has never been discovered, it is declared, though several plays of this name were known to Shakespeare's time and became exceedingly popular. Of the present play a number of quartos were printed during the poet's life, showing that it had also its voracious reading-public buttressed with strong nerves.

So we assign this play in full to Shakespeare as revealing a rudimentary but very necessary stage of the poet's evolution. Without it there would be a gap in his self's all-rounded utterance and

achievement. To be sure, it is not a pleasant play; if the reader is seeking amusement merely, he can find it less shocking elsewhere. But if he wishes to trace the entire development of the unique Life-drama of Shakespeare, even the disgustingly embryonic part, he will make a microscopic examination of *Titus Andronicus*. He will find everywhere in it mementos of the Stratford school-boy saturated with his classicism. The daring young genius is at work, defiantly heaping together all sorts of dramatic horrors, out-Kyding the redoubtable Thomas Kyd in making humanity hideous. Thus the play shows the protoplasmic dramaturgy of the nascent genius testing in writ devildom itself.

We believe that the researchful reader will feel a bent to compare this lowest play with highest *Hamlet*, which also registers on its list of blood some eight murders, and is not without its full tally of horrors. But marvelous is the difference between the two tragedies, and hence we grapple after the poet's hidden thread of development from one to the other, running through ten or a dozen years. So savagely alike yet so humanly different! Let the problem be deferred for the present; one little point however we may score here: *Hamlet* portrays an unearthly revenge, yet at the same time the deepest reaction of the spirit against it; while *Titus Andronicus* is pure nemesis quite without any backstroke of compunction. The hideous devil of the play Aaron, black outside and blacker inside,

makes the sole scoffing allusion to the soul's inner remedial power:

And hast a thing within thee called conscience—

which thing or rather deity is enthroned in *Hamlet*, and rules the argument from start to finish.

This youthful play, accordingly, has in it a good deal of prophecy forecasting the matured Shakespeare. As a tragedy we may take it to prelude the poet's tragic or second Period; it shoots many germs which we can trace fructifying in his later greatest works. It, moreover, has a marked affinity with *Henry VI*, already considered; each represents a world-chaos, the one being old Roman, the other medieval English, in which chaotic social upheavals the young genius of Titanic aspiration usually lets go his first creative delight; for he revolts against all tradition, and proposes, as the new-born demiurge, to make God's defective universe more perfect than ever. Finally to-day nobody can forget that here is one phase of that twenty-centuried conflict between Teutonia and Roma, still seething and unsettled; in this play specially it is designated as the war between the Goths and the Romans, or between Barbarism and Civilisation.

Hence it results that this bloodiest work of *Titus Andronicus* became a popular theme all over Northern Europe; we read of old German and Dutch plays on the present subject along with several English ones besides that of Shakespeare. The

Teutonic folk of the North must have felt some very profound racial instinct fermenting in these dramas, betokening the eternal struggle between the Germanic and the Latin or Mediterranean worlds. Let it be again stated that this most furious and deepest-seated dualism of Europe finds its highest poetic presentment and reconciliation in Shakespeare, originating in his case especially through his trip to Italy.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

So we pass, for the sake of revealing a chief node in the growth of Shakespeare, to what we may call the most thoroughly Italian or rather Italianized work of the poet, very successful and eternal. There is no telling how many years have run since the composition of the former Romanized play of *Titus Andronicus*, but we can observe a marked cultural change and transformation in the author. Both dramas, however, belong to the same epoch, the imitative, outreaching, experimental. Equally deep-motived is the transfer of the basic passion from bloody nemesis to tragic love.

The transition of the poet from England to Italy may be repeatedly discerned in the play. First let it be noted that the great majority of the commentators predicate at least two redactions of the work, though the real significance of each they seem not distinctly to conceive. As we look at the matter, the earlier play or perhaps sketch was

English or rather pre-Italian; the nurse who is an old English granny times her part as taking place in 1591, of which date she prattles:

'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years,
And she was weaned—I never shall forget it.

Said earthquake was also English, hardly Italian, being chronicled in England under the year 1580. The nurse, though otherwise not pedantically exact in her chronology, is very emphatic here, so that we can say this speech of hers belongs to the first couple of years before Shakespeare's trip to Italy. On the other hand certain historic allusions in the drama seem to suggest events which occurred two or three years after the poet's return from the South. Such indications are indeed faint and vague, still they hint what the actual text of the work plainly shows: a pre-Italian and a post-Italian element running through the whole action, a lower comic and a higher tragic set of characters, a Northern and Southern strain in speech, manners, personages, yea in the very soul of the poetic organism.

The first outer fact of this play, falling at once into the eye, hints already its deeper purport: the title is sexed, the man and woman are conjoined equally by name in the tragic action, Romeo and Juliet are here married forever by Shakespeare, and not till death shall separate them and bury them in oblivion. For before us they live and love to-day, indissoluble in their hot wedlock till per-

chance the planet itself may grow cold. The love-cult rising from this poem must have started soon after its first production, and it has been kept up ever since with a countless increase of communicants. Whereof an early indication may be found in Marston, a poet cotemporary with Shakespeare, who versifies his little laugh at stage-stricken love-lorn Luscus, the youth yearning for his heart's passionate expression through this drama :

Luscus, what's played to-day?—Faith, now I
know,
I see thy lips abroad, from whence doth flow
Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo.

Here it is in place to note that these sexed titles are employed by Shakespeare in two other plays, both tragedies as labeled in the First Folio—*Troilus and Cressida*, to which must be superlatively added *Antony and Cleopatra*. These are three works which reach through nearly his entire dramatic career, from almost its beginning till toward its close. Hence the question rises: why select just these three dramas out of the entire thirty-six (not thirty-seven) in which is stressed the sexual fact by elevating the woman alongside the man to mark the name of the work? In no other plays does our poet assign to the female a titular place alongside the male, or even alone, according to the baptismal register of the First Folio, which doubtless shows the poet choosing his own titles for his own productions. At least we may

here premise that these three plays, so far apart in time of composition, but double-gendered in their very faces, are not so labeled by mere accident, but are kinned in some inner strain and outer structure common to them all, and mirrored in the personal evolution of the poet himself.

Still the woman in many, yea in most of Shakespeare's works, especially the Comedies, is the stronger and higher character, the dominant personality, often carrying the deepest, indeed the mediatorial role of the dramatic conflict. Such is the honor with which our poet crowns her in all his latest dramas. But she never gets credit for her Shakespearian worth in the Shakespearian title, never is nominated in the inscription's blazon. For instance, the *Merchant of Venice* surely ought to be called *Portia*. Just why may this not be? I have on occasion thought that it resulted from the fact that in Shakespeare's time his female roles were taken by a man, or oftener by a boy. But just imagine that stage when a piping adolescent with his voice cracking to discordant pieces all the way down between tenor and basso, had to speak the perfervid part of Juliet in the balcony love-scene or in the supulchre's death-scene. Let us not get addicted to the glorification of such a theatre, though it be Shakespeare's own Globe. Too much inclined we are to-day in our antiquarian craze to seek for Shakespeare himself in the petty details of Shakespeare's very imperfect stage. Let them not be neglected, but at the same time let it be duly

recognized that he is infinitely greater than his little scenic pinfold. The poet himself doubtless felt the inadequacy of such a presentation of his great woman, and we may hear his disgust (*Antony and Cleopatra* V. 2. 216) in what Cleopatra says as she thinks of herself when acted by a boy:

The quick comedians

Extemporally will stage us—and I shall see

Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness—

which tells a fact taken directly from the actor's own experience.

The very date has been handed down, December 8, 1660, half a century after Shakespeare's activity, when the part of Desdemona was first played by a woman—then an awful innovation even for the English theatre. Still in spite of such an external handicap, the poet's female characters are of his all-best—doubtless better on the whole than his male. For Shakespeare has portrayed no Greatest Man—not a Christ, nor a Socrates, and his Caesar is not the mightiest Julius alive and doing his sovereign deed. Strange as it may seem, through that squeaking boy our poet has voiced and eternized some of the greatest and most commanding woman-souls of all time. But in order to perform such a feat, his genius in the supreme act of creation had to fling off the fetters of that cramping Elizabethan stage-prison. We shiver to think of Cordelia modulating her boyish squeak on the boards:

Her voice was ever soft
Gentle and low—an excellent thing in woman.

Thus we judge that the sexed caption heard in the coupled names of this play, *Romeo and Juliet*, has its significance in the poet's total work, especially when taken in connection with the two other mentioned tragedies which are similarly titled. But this is not all. In his epopee of amorous passion called *Venus and Adonis* is found another sexed designation, now legendary, of a goddess and a mortal youth. Also in his sonnets are paired the poet himself and his elusive Dark Lady. Notable is the fact that in all these cases—Juliet, Cressida, Cleopatra, Mary Fitton—the woman is the dominant, the compelling personality. Such must have been, in general the deepest Shakespearian conviction and underlying consciousness, brought to activity and enforced by some all-overmastering individual experience. Here then we should recall the place of his sovereign mother in his early Stratford days. Can we forget in such a connection the marriage of the boy William Shakespeare with the much older Anne Hathaway? And his youthful flight from home? For that decisive experience may be detected working through his entire *Pandrama*, inasmuch as we can feel a strong and very characteristic pulsation of it throbbing up full-hearted in his latest work, the *Tempest* (See IV. 1, 15-22). So we may add to the foregoing sexed pairs of his writ, the original unwritten but the real ones, bonded at Stratford on the Avon, founda-

tion and first germinal reality of all these ideally visioned couples of his genius.

This play of *Romeo and Juliet* has its very decided presuppositions, which must not be forgotten, though it be one of the poet's most original productions. Here we catch him again seizing his materials wherever he may find them congenial to his Muse—the crude, unsmelted, and uncoined ore of his unversified gold, which he then proceeds to mint into his poetical treasure. His prime quarry in the present case was a poem published before his birth (1562) by Arthur Brooke called *Romeus and Juliet*, which was written in rhymed Alexandrines, and furnished to the dramatist a quite complete outline of his story and of his characters with their names. Often too it motives the tendency to rhyme in the poet's drama, striking, as it were, the varied lyrical key-note of kissing words. Another early English version in prose (1567) the young Shakespeare could have eagerly devoured in *Palace of Pleasure*. But the tale itself came to England from Italy, where it seems to have been universally diffused by the Italian romancers, especially by the popular *Bandello*, whom Shakespeare is often supposed to have read in the original. Under many forms—novel, ballad, drama—the story became current throughout the whole Mediterranean world, in Spain, France as well as Italy; indeed it seems to have first burgeoned back in Greece, the germinal originator, as usual. This long record of popular evolution has its fascination,

but must here be omitted. Only one fact and one writer would we fish out of this vast mass of protoplasmic love-lore: Luigi da Porto about 1530 is declared to have been the first to join the two lovers Romeo and Juliet together by their lasting Shakespearian names, and also to have made them the children of two antagonistic Veronese families—an ever-memorable thought-stroke of the obscure little Italian story-teller, and destined to embalm for long his rather dead name. Still when all is told, the chief credit of furnishing to our poet the whole storied skeleton of his drama, as well as hints for his English realistic characters, such as the Apothecary and the Nurse (though I believe that Shakespeare saw them both at Stratford and freshened their features), belongs to the fore-mentioned Arthur Brooke.

There is both external and internal evidence that the poet reveals a considerable evolution of himself during several years in this drama. The final stage of it is historically indicated in the title-page of the completed Quarto numbered the second, and dated 1599, which, somewhat abbreviated, runs thus: "The most excellent and lamentable Tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*. As it has been sundry times publicly acted. *Newly corrected, augmented and amended*—London." Here the striking point is the statement concerning the fresh elaboration and improvement of the play compared with its previous form or forms, one of which may have been the First Quarto (1597) much smaller and less com-

plete. Thus we behold its last shape; what then was its first? Doubtless the dramatic hints which rose in the poet's mind from his early reading of Brooke's poem. That was the original germ round which his materials kept gathering for years, and which took up and assimilated his outer information on his subject as well as his inner experience of soul. Such are the two extremes, the finished organism and its originating cell, both fairly discernible and documented in cotemporaneous print. But what intervening steps of ascent lay between that top and this bottom? These are doubtless largely conjectural, but I believe that of them we may catch the general outline.

In the first place the Italian atmosphere and spirit which are so characteristic of the present poem, are, in my view, the result of Shakespeare's visit to Italy, of which something has been already said. The poet required his subject to be primarily saturated with his own immediate experience of life; this was what his genius specially needed for its work of artistic transfiguration. His Italian Journey probably took place about 1592-3, and naturally the poetic traveler carried the first draught of his *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as that of his *Venus and Adonis*, along with him to the land of art and poetry. In like manner Goethe (we may repeat) who, in his younger time had conceived and written in prose his *Iphigenia* and his *Tasso*, rewrote and transformed them into their present poetic completeness while in Italy, which

land gave him his new artistic inspiration. Yet how different was the effect of this Italian Journey upon the two world-poets! Goethe sought to recover the antique form and spirit, and would reproduce them in his two dramas, while Shakespeare appropriated the form and spirit of the modern Italian Renaissance, and dropped or perchance transmuted his old-Roman tendency. Still there is no doubt he saw and studied ancient art, of which Italy was so full. Thus he now Italianized himself, as he had before Romanized himself, for instance in *Titus Andronicus*.

But the second and far more distinctive atmosphere enveloping *Romeo and Juliet* is that of love, youthful love of man and woman, which here finds its sovereign expression in human writ. Underneath all this passionate upburst lay also a corresponding personal experience. There is no doubt that during these years Shakespeare breasted his first overwhelming tidal wave of love, which persisted the underlying ever-driving passion of his life-drama. For now the Dark Lady starts to weave her voluptuous but fatuous strand not merely into his emotions but into the very soul of his creative genius, of which fact we catch frequent shimmerings reflected from the glow of these tragical lovers.

Somewhere, then, between the completed form of his drama (Quarto 1599) and the first budding of it, say some eight years before, lay those two grand experiences, his trip to Italy and his new passion.

To the latter the transition from his old unrequited love, imaged in Romeo's change from Rosaline to Juliet, is made with some emphasis in the play, even if it is already found in Brooke as well as in himself. About 1595-6, hence after his return from Italy, the Dark Lady begins her long triumphant reign over his heart and thence over his creative energy, whereof we find a more or less continuous record in the Sonnets.

One of the early Sonnets (No. 23) may be taken to represent the poet's first bashful attempt to declare his love, so that he begs his lady to look into his writ for what he has been unable to speak.

As an imperfect actor on the stage
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own
heart;

So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay
O'ercharg'd with burden of mine own love's
might.

O let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
Who plead for love and look for recompense,
More than that tongue that more hath more
expressed.

O learn to read what silent love hath writ;
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

Who may be the addressee starts the problem here as everywhere in the Sonnets—man, woman, or something else. In the above case only a woman approached by her embarrassed admirer “who forgets to say the perfect ceremony of love’s rite” fits the situation. The poet, though he stammer helpless before such a presence, knows that in his books he can beat the world in expressing love, where his lady must “learn to read what silent love hath writ.” So the sonneteer celebrates his power of self-expression through his pen for the relief of his over-burdened heart: such is supremely the writer, his book is his confession and perchance his expiation. In like manner the dramatist has given utterance to his own intense love-thrills in those of *Romeo*; but he goes through and gets rid of his passion’s tragedy through that of his hero. He saves himself by slaying his tragic counterpart. Still this play is but the overture to the grand symphony of his love-life of which much remains yet to be lived and loved, and then to be expressed.

II. *Comedies of the Present Epoch.* Let us emphasize the main point at the start: just as we saw two kinds of Tragedies dividing this Second Epoch, namely the pre-Italian and the post-Italian, so we shall find the same division of it in the Comedies belonging here, of which we set down three in successive order—*The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Love’s Labor’s Lost*. This may be also the chronological sequence of these plays, as they came from the workshop of the

author; but there is not proof enough at hand to decide that question. Still it is quite generally agreed that they all belong to one Epoch, and an early one, of the poet's productivity.

A little inspection, however, will show that the first one *The Comedy of Errors* is pre-Italian, old-Roman in story, names, locality, being imitated from a classic Latin play. Equally certain is it that the next Comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is Italianized in story, names, locality, with a personal experience of places lacking in the first. But the third Comedy above mentioned embraces both sides, being made up of a pre-Italian as well as a post-Italian element, the one being derived from England and the other from Italy, though both are located in Navarre. Thus *Love's Labor's Lost* seems a coalescence, if not a reconciliation of English and Italian, of Northern and Southern, of Teutonic and Romanic, which the poet will keep working at and repeating throughout his entire Life-drama. So we may again re-say: he harmonized, at least in his art, Roma and Teutonia, that primordial deepest dualism of Europe, whereof the first pronounced note, even if not yet clarified is heard in these works.

Such is the inner thread of connection which we shall try to track through these three plays, and show them as three consecutive phases, pre-Italian, post-Italian, and the conjunction of the two, revealing three single steps, so to speak, in the evolution of the universal poet.

· COMEDY OF ERRORS.

Good judges have pronounced this the earliest play of Shakespeare as to time of origin. Quite possible, but there is no real proof; and it has to compete with several others for such first starting place. That it belongs to Shakespeare, however, there are two best witnesses: Francis Meres (1598) and the First Folio (1623). It is still seen upon the boards, but its chief interest for the full-fledged Shakespearian is its biographic significance. It is permeated with the poet's Stratford happenings, which must have been very fresh in his mind when he wrote this drama. Of course he throws his own experience far back into classic antiquity, and practises this early dramatic self-estrangement or disguise of himself, which is to become his occupation for life. So we have here a chance to watch Shakespeare's primal transformation of his own selfhood into his art.

Most puppet-like play on the outside in all Shakespeare, yet very germinal of his future work, containing many of its embryos: this *Comedy of Errors*, superficial as it seems, is deserving of a far deeper and more appreciative study as a phase in the evolution of Shakespeare than I have yet seen in any of the hundred and one commentators. It is a very bright, rapid, superficial, but comprehensive labyrinth of Accident and of the manifold illusions caused by it in man's individual and associative life; for not only single persons but insti-

tutions—Family, State, the Business World and the Social Order—get entangled in its gossamer-woven meshes of deceptive appearances. The human being is shown the victim of Chance, his senses simply tell him lies, and he becomes the sport of the grand Hindoo Maya for a while at least. So the hapless wayfarer is brought to believe himself a lost soul in a devil-ruled Inferno; no wonder that the poor mortal Antipholus, mirage-led through falsehood's maze of a world, loses himself externally and internally, exclaiming

Am I in earth, in heaven or in hell?
 Sleeping or waking? mad or well-advised?
 Known unto these and to myself disguised!

Still we are never to forget that the course of the drama shows this lying realm of Chance to be undone and indeed self-undone; the false plays false to itself and thus betrays itself as truly false. Hence the whole action is comic, ridiculous, vanishing in a laugh of the spectators, who sit outside and above these cozening appearances. But the victim, who is enmeshed in them, will tremblingly whisper:

This town (world) is full of cozenage—
 As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye
 Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
 Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
 Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks
 And many such-like liberties of sin.

So the lie-beridden soul will try to run away from his own untruth, but runs right into it again, since it rises before him everywhere, till he goes through it and masters its sense-deceiving prestidigitation. Whereof this comedy of "Errors", that is, of Illusions, inner and outer, gives quite a serious lesson just through its laughter.

The means here employed is called Mistaken Identity, or Misplaced Personality, in which the wrong person is taken for the right one, and the right person in his turn is taken for the wrong one: so we may state the matter in popular, if not very correct phrasing. Then two sets of Mistaken Identities represented in the two groups of twins—the two Antipholuses and the two Dromios—are thrown all commingled together into this sense-world, whereby they and it are subjected to the grand discipline of Illusion, or "Error" as the poet terms it. Still further, the identity (or resemblance) extends not only to the looks of the twins, but to their names and even to their dress. Thus an outside and unknown power seems to be directing them like so many puppets into all sorts of mistaken cognitions and recognitions, for which they get in one way or other mistaken punishments as well as mistaken loves. So these good Christians begin in their extremity to think of prayer, though the drama is set in ancient Greek Heathendom:

O for my beads; I cross me for a sinner!
This is the fairy land: O spite of spites!

We talk with goblins, owls, and elvish sprites:
If we obey them not, this will ensue,
They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and
blue.

And now in accord with the purpose of this book of ours we have to ask, what has Shakespeare's *Life-drama* to do with this variegated tangle of *Mistaken Identities*? A good deal of straight-out personal experience he could have enjoyed in this matter within his own family. His father, John Shakespeare of Henley Street, trader, ale-taster, butcher and what not, had his double in name right in Stratford, to-wit, John Shakespeare, the thriving shoemaker of Bridge Street, which fact could hardly help causing to outsiders and even to townsmen some confusion, and must have been known to the quick-witted fun-loving lad William Shakespeare. And one rather faint report has reached us that both these Johns had for wives two Marys, whereby the identity in names becomes again doubled. Now it so happens that some of the business troubles of our John Shakespeare have been mistakenly ascribed to shoemaker John by certain modern writers; thus a small bit of the real Shakespearian *Comedy of Errors* has been staged in our day.

Let us now imagine our school-boy, sprightly William, during this time to take a reading lesson under the tuition of Master Simon Hunt B. A., graduate of Oxford, in Latin Plautus, whose drama

Menaechmi turns just on a case of Mistaken Identity, and is supposed to have furnished the chief suggestions for Shakespeare's own *Comedy of Errors*. Would not the alert pupil say in class: "I know something of that sort right here in Stratford; it is my own dad's case"—a Shakespearian household word, let the horrified reader reflect. Such a lesson would give the germ of his future play—the mistake through the same name. Then the mistake through personal resemblance is even more frequent. Have you not, my dear sir, mistaken and been mistaken often in that same way—taken some one for somebody else and been yourself so taken? Of such kind are the gifts of experience out of which the Genius conjures his poetic fabric.

Thus he dramatizes his own immediate observation into the Latin transmitted model, which, however, he amplifies and improves. Both elements, the transmitted and the original, are necessary for him and will last him through life. Note too that this little work flows all of a piece, shows a pervasive unity both of form and of spirit, and seems to have been finished at one long pull of breath, as it were under a single unbroken inspiration. Moreover it is Shakespeare's shortest play, counting only 1770 lines, while *Hamlet* (3929 lines) is more than twice as long, and so are several other of his tragedies. It has no division into Southern and Northern characters, into Latin and English elements, such as we see in quite all his later dramas, both

Comedies and Tragedies. Even the clowns here speak in verse with two or three small exceptions of prose, which may be taken as the start of the poet's later habit. In this respect also the present play is germinal.

On account of such an external sport of contingencies, which, however, are nicely and subtly dovetailed into one another, we have here the appearance of a highly complicated mechanism, of a many-threaded spinning-jenny moved by an outside unseen power. Thus it lays bare the pure machinery of all dramatic construction; or we may deem it the stripped skeleton of Comedy's very organism, which is hereafter to be covered by the life-artist with living flesh. For such reason it is the least soulful, the least inward-revealing of all Shakespeare's dramas, though it mirrors a good many external incidents of the poet's juvenescence. Hence it often recalls Stratford, I believe it to be on the whole more Stratfordian than any other production of his Muse, though there is somewhat of his Stratford discipline in all his writ, and more particularly in his earlier efforts.

And now we come to consider the one very pronounced exception to the more or less external puppetry of this drama, even if it must be granted that there are some marked differences (but rather conventional) of character peeping out of the obliterating identities between the two Dromios. These, however, we shall hurry by in order to stress the one living incarnation in this comedy: it is the

tully vitalized woman Adriana, wife of Ephesian Antopholus. Read her part all through the play, and you will feel in it the throb of immediate experience beating out of the heart of the author, who is here warily telling on himself and his own household, and not merely fabricating out of his head a highly convoluted amazing gimcrack for the idle diversion of his theatrical audience. To be sure, by way of contrast and opposition to Adriana, her sister Luciana gets endowed with a considerable amount of vital portraiture, so that we see in her petite features the germs of a number of the poet's later and more fully evolved women-characters.

Accordingly we are now permitted to overhear Shakespeare at home with his rather oldish wife, who, notwithstanding has in less than three years presented to him three babies—he being still under age and having no money and little earning power. Hence we soon catch her self-pitying outcry: “a wretched soul, bruised with adversity”, and she spurns “this fool-begged patience” which is so easily advised by her unmarried sister Luciana. Moreover the still juvenile Shakespeare has got the habit of straying from his too domestic household, as we can hear in the poor wife's bitter reproaches, for instance

But he, the unruly deer, he breaks the pale
And feeds from home; poor I am but his stale.

The result is a knifing jealousy weaponed with an *ever-whetted* tongue, which she fails not to un-

sheathe and slash at him whenever he crosses his own door-sill. Who is this "poor I" who can pour so much reality into her sorrows? Of course it is Adriana, a wife living in far-away Ephesus, and talking a kind of Greek which the reader must translate into Stratfordese, if he wishes to understand what it is all about.

Then we feel to be almost cruel, indeed unnatural, the outspoken way in which the poet makes that home-tied wife uncover not only her domestic situation, but also her physical and mental shortcomings. For while the all-gifted youth ranges abroad and showers the gems of his genius both in love and poesy upon "his minions", chiefly female,

I at home starve for a merry look—
Hath homely age the alluring beauty took
From my poor cheek? Then he hath wasted it.

Did he not hear this from ageing Anne Hathaway more than once? And is he not the real source of her wreckage? Or is it that antique Ephesian Dame Adriana who has been "ruined" in form and feature by bearing three children to her husband, the young and dashing Antipholus, in less than three years, though such special circumstance she naturally does not mention? But listen:

That's not my fault—he is master of my state—
What ruins are in me that can be found
By him not ruined? Then is he the ground
Of my defeatures.
A sunny look of his would soon repair—

but no sunburst can seemingly break through that eternal domestic storm-cloud. Still further, our hapless Adriana is made to confess her intellectual deficiencies in the eyes of her Antipholus:

Are my discourses dull? barren my wit?
If voluble and sharp discourse be marred,
Unkindness blunts it more than marble hard.

Really we may catch Shakespeare telling on himself in these and similar passages, and revealing the trend of his fateful domesticities. He pours molten into these burning words of wife Adriana his own blood-hot personal experiences; and one chief indication is that he forgets himself in his intensity and falls out of his role, for surely this Adriana (or Anne Hathaway) is not barren of wit or dull of discourse. In fact, she is just as witty, just as poetic, just as overflowing with young genius as young William himself, if not rather more so than usual, for the reason that he gets to voicing through her words his own deepest Life-drama. By the way this dropping of the formal role for himself we shall often detect as a sign of the self-intrusion of the real Shakespeare, and generally at his mightiest. Read her part carefully and you will say that this shrewish self-disparaging Adriana is the most capable, the most living person in the play. Shakespeare would never have quit such a wife, with a genius equal to his own. So we shall try to catch and to hold fast our Protean poet in his thousandfold transformations till he re-

veals himself in his one true fundamental shape, which not infrequently rises to the surface and becomes visible and distinct from his vast circumambient dramatic ocean. Watch him work till you can sense the pure gold of his poetry, as it starts to flowing out of the heart of his experience into its eternally current coinage of English speech.

Finally we dare indentify another passage of this play with a home-scene in Stratford. In the last Act we begin to get suspicious when the good moral Abbess defends the wayward, rather un-moral Antipholus. With much vigor she turns her tirade against the jealous wife Adriana :

The venom clamors of a jealous woman
 Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
 It seems his sleeps were hindered by thy railing . . .
 Thou sayst his meat was sauced with thy upbraidings.

The result is, as points the partial Abbess sharply: thou hast "scared thy husband from the use of his wits." No very religious role is this for our strict nun, who so gently touches the husband's peccadillos when his roomy eye

Strayed his affection in unlawful love—
 A sin prevailing much in youthful men
 Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing.

I wonder who this rather prejudiced woman-judge may be. My guess is, mother Mary Arden Shake-

speare is here voiced by her poetical son in the great family dispute which led to his flight from Stratford. Perhaps some faint religious tendency we may also catch in her note, for she belonged to a Catholic family, though probably she was not a Catholic herself. Thrice mothered we dare conceive this maternal Abbess, being not only the Christian Mother Superior of a priory in heathen Ephesus, but also the dramatic mother of Antipholus, and finally the real mother of young Shakespeare.

Could the poet help remembering, in writing this drama, that he was likewise separated from his twin babes, having been wrecked for the time being in his life's voyage by a tempest, doubtless of some violence? No exact dates are possible, or needed, but let us think the husband within a couple of years after leaving his wife and infants behind at Stratford, meditating and composing in London this play of the storm-sundered family, as a memento of his past, and then ideally bringing its scattered members together again at the close, as a prophetic hope of the future—which early dream this Life-drama of his, after much delay and discipline, will at last fulfil in the deed. So the Shakespearian mother (she lived till 1608) finally unites and reconciles the disrupted family. Hence the double-visioned reader may see not merely the Mother Superior of a far-away drama but the Mother Superior of the poet William Shakespeare himself now writing his Life-drama, as she hope-

fully forecasts her son's return to Stratford and to her, in these final tender words of hers entreating the gathered household

To go with us into the abbey here,
 And hear at large discoursed all our fortunes;
 And all that are assembled in this place,
 That by this sympathized one day's error
 Have suffered wrong, go keep us company,
 And we shall make full satisfaction.
 Thirty three years have I but gone in travail
 Of you, my sons—

especially of that one darling genius of a son, now happily restored to her after long separation.

For such reasons we deem the present play very close to Shakespeare's own self at his dramatic starting-point, and best to be placed several years before his Italian journey, of which it shows no personally experienced trace. But his next drama is mooded to a different key.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

Verona connects by a local tie this play with *Romeo and Juliet*, or the two lovers of Verona. But also in style, mood, theme both dramas interweave and recall each other for the sympathetic reader. They are in a manner paired, though the one be a comedy and the other a tragedy. We feel in each the Italian spell of the poet, and its dominant passion; both were probably composed about

the same time though their merits be so different, ranging the whole gamut from lofty success down quite to failure.

Still this play has its unique place and value in the Life-drama of the author, and is truly indispensable. More than any other production of his it tells about the traveler Shakespeare on his Italian trip, which means so much to his present and his future. Also it gives his views generally about the training through travel, though under a dramatic mask, transparent enough when seen from the right angle of vision.

Still a poor drama: I may dare call it the poorest of Shakespeare's whole thirty-six; thin for him in matter and in power, though it has some pretty rememberable passages, even if not very deep and compelling, like

The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopped, impatiently doth
rage;

But when his fair course is not hindered
He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wild Ocean.

Wherein is well illustrated this play's poetic flow which ripples like little Avon but never surges to wildly Oceanic Shakespeare, whose speech elsewhere frequently roars as the tempest and tosses

us skyward. Nor is the characterization very robust, but runs along rather shallow and formal; and the wind-up is a right break-down, so that we cry out in pain, "O most lame and impatient conclusion!" In our day it is hardly worth a serious reading except for one thing, which specially concerns us now: it carries along in its limpid but insignificant stream, somewhat under the surface at times, divers important personal facts about the poet's previous experience.

So many little things turn up like Shakespeare, yet without the burst of his genius, without the individual seal of his Muse, that if I should come into my knowing it for the first time, I would say to myself: "the work of a promising but youthful imitator; I think I have read quite as good reproductions of Shakespeare poetically as this drama." But the real objective evidence will not permit us for a moment to assign it to any lesser cotemporary playwright, as its authenticity is vouched for by the two best possible witnesses: the First Folio (1623) where it is printed second in the list of Comedies, and the word of Francis Meres (1598) who places it first of his six cited Comedies. Thus both sources fully authorize it and also hint its early production, but give no date.

Hence this youthful imitator of Shakespeare is the young Shakespeare himself, and his seeming imitation is really his own immature but growing production. Still we must repeat that the more it falls short in poetic value, the more it appears to

increase in biographic import; if it fails to grip us as a single drama when taken alone, it more than makes up the loss by the renewed interest in itself when considered as an integral part and connecting link in the poet's total Life-drama, whose development is now our supreme endeavor.

Accordingly we shall tally the several successive points which come before us in viewing the action from the present angle.

I. At the start the play stresses the cultural need of travel—of separation from fireside and country in case of the ambitious young man, such as is Shakespeare now: "Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits." Hence the cry is: up and be off on thy trip to foreign lands, where it is thy better lot

To see the wonders of the world abroad,
Than living dully sluggardized at home
Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness.

So says Valentine evidently voicing that aspiring young man William Shakespeare, who is now tensely minded to set out upon his travels. The locality is declared to be Italian Verona, and the destination thence is Milan, seat of the Emperor's court, where his youth will not be worn out "with shapeless idleness."

But here the reader soon gets inquisitive. Verona and Milan are in the same country, Northern Italy, and not so many hours distant from each other. This fact Shakespeare must have known from his

guide-book or from his Italian teacher at London, Giovanni Florio. Why then such a big flourish over such a little promenade? No Veronese could possibly say or think that he was starting to travel "abroad" on skipping over to Milan, and there was able "to see the wonders of the world." But of whom could such a statement be made? Of the poet himself setting out from London on his considerable Italian journey, then of course far more difficult than now. Here again we may catch Shakespeare himself peeping out from behind his mask, and even telling his own plan of travel. Still further we find (IV. 1, 33) that this Valentine Shakespeare is specially gifted with "the tongues" for his trip, which plural word may well hint, besides English, the Italian and probably the French languages, of both of which Shakespeare shows himself to have some knowledge in his plays. But to journey from Verona to Milan the Veronese traveler would surely need only the one tongue, his own cultivated Italian, and he would even understand the popular dialect of Milan which is not so very unlike his own. But our Valentine Shakespeare evidently takes a good deal of pleasure in his knowledge of "the tongues", as we may catch from his wee note of self-gratulation:

My youthful travel therein made me happy
Or else I often had been miserable.

Moreover this accomplishment is one of the reasons why he is suddenly promoted to be captain of a

band of outlaws, as they are just now seeking for "a linguist and a man of such perfection", who also is "beautified with goodly shape". Very appreciative of Shakespeare's excellences are those Robin Hood rangers of the "Forest near Milan":

We'll do thee homage and be ruled by thee
Love thee as our commander and our King.

And now we are to consider the second and even more emphatic appraisal of travel. Proteus, friend of Valentine, has been held at home in Verona by love, so that he refused to budge from the town. The result is that his father is impertuned by a friendly adviser to take in hand his untraveled son:

To let him spend his time no more at home,
Which would be great impeachment to his age
In having known no travel in his youth.

The anxious parent has been already "hammering" at the problem, and we hear again a little dissertation on the cultural value of traveled experience, in which we have to think also of the poet:

I have considered well his loss of time,
And how he cannot be a perfect man
Not being tried and tutored in the world.
Experience is by industry achieved
And perfected by the swift course of time.

But the next question is: "Whither were I best to send him?" This was doubtless Shakespeare's

own question to himself. The answer runs: to Milan, now capital of Italy, which is the high abode of "the Emperor's court". Hither accordingly Proteus, too, the son, has to speed after Valentine.

So much investigation we have spent upon this overture of travel in the present play, since it mirrors with some detail a memorable passage in Shakespeare's Life-drama: his journey from home abroad, from London to Italy. Also it hints the transition from the purely Classic discipline of his previous stage to the culture of the Italian Renaissance, which will live with him in one form or other to the close of his career. Thus we are here made to pass from the spiritual atmosphere of the *Comedy of Errors* to that of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—a weighty experience in the poet's evolution.

At this connecting point we may touch upon certain difficulties. In the first place Shakespeare implies that Verona is a sea-port with ships at anchor and ready to sail. So Valentine says on leaving:

My father at the road (harbor)

Expects my coming, there to see me shipped—

Whereat much Herculean labor from the commentators, even to the extent of digging up from old records a forgotten canal between Verona and Milan, both of them seemingly inland cities. But here let it be said that our dramatist often masks his geography as well as his deeds and himself. So

Valentine Shakespeare finds no difficulty in taking ship from Verona—London—for fair Italy, and even for Milan, nor did his English audience, nor need you, his reader to-day, though expert in geography.

Another crux for most of us, though generally shunned by the poet's expositors, is that above-cited expression "shapeless idleness" which will "wear out thy (Shakespeare's) youth dully sluggardized at home." Here seems hinted the special trouble which is to be cured by the journey to Italy, to form-giving Italy, which has the power to remedy the young poet's sodden inartistic shapelessness. A similar reason Goethe assigns for his Italian journey: he, the shapeless Northerner, would take up and make his own the peculiar gift of the formful South in its art. That also Shakespeare won and employed this unique excellence derived from renascent Italy, can be traced throughout his whole coming achievement.

II. One of these two Veronese gentlemen, Valentine, we have seen setting out on his travels with single-minded determination, so that from the start we feel his strength of purpose in accord with his name (from Latin *valeo*). Thus Valentine impresses us with his will, is indeed a will-character. In marked contrast with him is limned the inner nature of his friend, labeled with evident design Proteus, a changeful fluctuating spirit, if there ever was one—in fine an emotional character. The name suggests the infinitely variable in form, like

the sea-waves, once be-sung of old Proteus in the *Odyssey*. Moreover it brings a suggestion out of our boy's book of tales, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which is literally a Protean work, showing many transformations from manifold causes. But the chief cause in the case of this present Proteus is love with its numberless caprices and moody turns. Hence Proteus addresses his adorable quite in Ovidian reminiscence :

Thou, Julia, hast metamorphosed me,
 Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
 War with good counsel, set the world at nought,
 Made wit with musing weak, heart sick with
 thought.

Such is the poet's own inner condition, his emotional ups and downs, which he has painted all his life in thousandfold iridescence. So we have to think that here we glimpse Shakespeare again self-portrayed with a look back upon his Stratford studies. Now he is the counterpart to strong-willed Valentine, the other half of himself, and becomes the ever-yielding victim of love's emotions, not their suppressor and exterminator. Thus we, like ancient Ulysses, are summoned to watch the inner metamorphoses of this new Proteus Shakespeare, in contrast with his other and opposite moiety, the well-anchored Valentine Shakespeare.

In such fashion we find our poet dramatizing his own myriad-minded selfhood into many diverse characters. Here two opposing kinds or phases of

himself he projects into two of his dramatic personages. His present dual nature he sets forth in all its duality; a double-souled mortal Shakespeare reveals himself, reminding us of his world-poetical brother, Goethe, who in his *Faust* feelingly exclaims that he has two ever-separating souls in his breast:

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in dieser Brust,
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen.

III. Still in this drama likewise there is evolved and enthroned the one all-conqueror, Love, who at last seizes and overwhelms his former contemptuous and defiant foe, none other than our will-powerful Valentine, who, having traveled all the way from Verona to Milan, sees the daughter of the Duke, the high-born and beautiful Silvia, and on the spot succumbs. And the thing has been done with such celerity and vehement effervescence of emotion that his servant jester Speed has noted it, and rallies his master as having become just "like Sir Proteus." Moreover the fellow has also caught from his superiors a shred of Ovidian phraseology, chaffing his lord thus: "Now you (too) are *metamorphosed* with a mistress, that, when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master."

Here we detect again the confession of the poet crowning Love the sovereign not simply of this drama, but of his life; both sides of his double nature, the Will and the Emotion, have submitted to one autocrat. Shakespeare acknowledges himself

the lover supreme over the friend, even if at the end of the play he briefly and feebly tries to reconcile love and friendship, the two colliding dramatic motives. He, the good-looking, well-mannered gentleman, endowed with all the magic of genius, finds himself the charmer of women and of men too; witty, overflowing with the poetry of speech in his common talk, conceivably sympathetic of look (the Italian *simpatico*), sinning indeed but also sinned against, fascinating but himself fascinated the more, he the victorious lover is bound to become the prey of love. Though all the Julias of London run after him in their disguise, and become his slaves, one of them, perchance just the most Protean female, will ensnare and enslave and fix fast our ever-shifting Proteus. But this his deepest experience will stir his genius from its last depths, and compel him to an enormous creation, for he, the poet, can only get relief from his heart- quakes through an ever-flowing musical self-expression. Not without reason have some delving interpreters, doubtless themselves experienced of the same fact, found already in this play traces of the coming sinister Dark Lady, veiled in his Dramas, but unveiled in his Sonnets.

IV. Let us note again the transition from the preceding *Comedy of Errors* to the present *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, from outer Accident to inner Caprice, from an illusive objective sense-world to a changeful subjective love-world, from an external play of chances to an internal play of emo-

tions. Both have the common dramatic framework of parallel characters: two sets of lovers here, two sets of mistakers there; both seem a fixed mechanism of the movement of life's marionettes, though the one set appears moved from without, and the other from within. And especially let us not forget the transition from the Latinizing to the Italianizing dramatist.

With this work, accordingly, Shakespeare starts the long love-line of characters, men and more distinctively women, comic, tragic, tragi-comic, who move through his full-rounded Pan-drama till its finale. Herein lies his universal appeal, his world-note of popularity. Repeatedly in this play the key-word struck and made to vibrate through all these young hearts is love. Yet what the poet yearns to express remains still the inexpressible:

Didst thou but know the inly touch of Love
Thou wouldst as soon go kindle fire with snow
As seek to quench the fire of Love with words.

Just that *inly touch of Love* is what the poet has now experienced, and he will keep-on trying to word it through young-manhood, middle-age, to the verge of old-age. Observe that *inly touch* as distinct from other forms of Love; mark too the tender soulful adjective *inly*, now quite lost in English, though still heard and felt in the corresponding German *innig*. Even if it be spoken by a woman, Shakespeare has here given his experience (probably just won) of Love the eternal, and he becomes

not merely the lover, but the lover of Love and the immortal voice thereof; Phileros we may title him after the old Greek Mythus.

I do not think that Julia has yet become the Dark Lady, certainly not the Darkest Lady of the Sonnets, as some have held. Still she bridges over an intermediate but probably unrequited heart-stroke, from which, however, the poet wins the unforgettable experience of "the inly touch of Love", and takes it along with himself till life's "cockshut time".

On the whole, the highest characters in the play, the most constant, the most heroic, are the women, so that if titular justice were done, it should be called *The Two Gentlewomen of Verona*, since these are much worthier of the gentle title than the two *Gentlemen of Verona*, both of whom show themselves faithless to Love. Proteus, most fickle of men, is traitor to his lady, ingrate to his friend, and liar to Thurio. And Valentine is ready to give up his loved one to his friend—a sacrifice friendship ought not to ask, still less to offer. Again Shakespeare is seen conceiving and constructing much better women than men. Why? Look back into his primal originating home-life, at whose center stood his woman of women, his mother.

So those two Gentlewomen ought to have shown the door to those two Gentlemen at the end of the play, making it really a *Love's Labor's Lost*. You would have done so, even if the great dramatist not only spares but rewards those ungentlemanly

Gentlemen with the dearest prize of the human heart. I think that Shakespeare himself must have felt this awful discord in his music-forcing close, and have resolved to correct it in his next play, which is a real dramatic *Love's Labor's Lost* in name and action, though the love-lorn losers of Navarre are not half so deserving of an unhappy lot as the two happy Gentlemen of Verona.

LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST

First is to be stressed that the present play combines the two strains, pre-Italian and post-Italian, which we found separate in the two preceding plays, namely in *The Comedy of Errors* and in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. It should be here added that each of these productions seems to have been written during one mood of the poet, or at one gush of his creative energy, being quite homogeneous throughout. That is, each of these dramas has its own uniform style and character, while *Love's Labor's Lost* is decidedly heterogeneous within itself, containing some of his earliest ventures along with his more mature work.

In fact, the present comedy seems to have been used by the poet as a store-house or general reservoir into which he dumped a lot of miscellaneous compositions of very slight inner connection. It becomes a kind of dramatic curiosity-shop through which we wander curiously inspecting and testing all sorts of literary forms, since here we find folk-

songs, ballads, sonnets, doggerels, proverbs rhymed and unrhymed, as well as prose and blank verse, truly a museum of many-mooded effusions thrown into a drama.

Correspondingly, as many different dates have been assigned to its origin as it has literary diversities. Critics vary as to the time of its birth some eight or even ten years. Editor Richard Grant White says 1588, and not later; the other extreme may be taken to be the Quarto of 1598, whose title page affirms it to have been "newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespeare", wherein is implied that there was a previous edition or exemplar of it less correct and less complete. This evidence, good in itself, we are the more inclined to accept since the play shows marks of two very different recensions, the later one seemingly much more Italianized than the other in meter, style and spirit. Between these two dates (1588-1598), quite every year has been pre-empted by some critic for the play's starting-point with equal proof and equal lack of proof.

There is no doubt that such dispersion of critical opinion has its source and its image in the dispersion of the play itself. Now to our mind the best way of bringing some order into this chaos is to grasp fast the two cardinal divisions of it, the pre-Italian and post-Italian, both of which are very strikingly marked in the drama, showing an English element and a Southern element, each of which, however, has its sub-divisions.

“On the whole the worst jumbled-up play in all Shakespeare”, so the average reader impatiently exclaims as he seeks to find his way through this tangled mass of riotous imagination. The result is that the present work has gotten the bad name of being rather the most unreadable production of the poet, bringing often the ordinary honest explorer to a full stop somewhere in the middle of its tropical wilderness. Not that it is Shakespeare's thinnest and feeblest piece, as is sometimes said; on the contrary it is too luxuriant and overgrown in its way; very rich it is indeed, especially rich in chaos. But when we consider that it represents a phase or probably two (or more) coalescent phases of Shakespeare's own self which he has here projected into writ, we again open the book, and the interest starts up afresh, as we strike a new trail of that elusive yet ever-evolving personality of the poet whose jungle-play this is, and whose jungle-mood it mirrors. Thus we begin again threading the tortuous maze eagerly with the best companion in the world, namely Shakespeare himself, who is really the clew of this whole dramatic labyrinth with its numerous little by-ways and dark passages. Better perhaps than in any other work are we here led into and through all the capricious twists and turns of the poet's versatile and wayward subjectivity. Still not planless by any means is the monstrosity, even as pre-historic Nature is not, and especially as pre-historic Shakespeare is not.

At what point, then, may one tackle the seemingly recalcitrant mass so as to penetrate the more easily to its order? It seems to us that we can detect the play as a composite of several distinct stages, moods, experiences of its author: which diversity extends even to a difference of localities. These, as I trace them, may be counted four—Stratford, London, Italy, the Academe or Navarre.

I. *Stratford*. Many reminders we catch of the school-boy in his home town. So it comes that there is one entire group which we may call the Stratford coterie—the schoolmaster Holofernes, the curate Sir Nathaniel, and the constable Dull—who are interwoven quite externally as a distinct thread into the play. They are portrayed as caricatures, each in his own special field, but all are pedantic, conceited, yet small-minded, being sketched off rapidly with a dash of grotesquery. So we have first to catch the naughty boy Willie Shakespeare in his seat at school drawing satirical portraits of his teacher Holofernes, obeying not so much his pictorial as his dramatic impulse, which is his inborn gift. And here we have at least a reminiscence of that early skit. But who was the original? Surely not the London Italian Florio, as is often said. Then, which one of his three Stratford schoolmasters sits now as model? He cannot be definitely pointed out; certainly it was not Simon Hunt, his long-time teacher and probable encourager; I would vote for Thomas Jenkins, his last dominie whom he quit after a year's trial,

doubtless through some trouble or dissatisfaction. And Jenkins himself lost his position not long afterward. The curate or preacher with his scriptural name, Nathaniel, also belonged to that town-life, and the petty official Dull represents its Dogberrydom, which Shakespeare has caricatured elsewhere (see for instance *Much Ado about Nothing*).

Undoubtedly these three stock-characters are to be found on the stage long before Shakespeare; indeed in one form or other they may be picked out in every community—English, French, German, or even old heathen Greek, America knows them well in its villages; Abraham Lincoln's vanished New Salem had them without caricature—the schoolmaster Mentor Graham famed along with his world-famous pupil, the town minister, and small officialdom. Shakespeare, the germinal dramatist of all time, had experienced this special trio of communal characters at home, though they are likewise universal products of human society, and hence of its literature. It is well to observe that these three Stratfordites (as we may think them for the nonce) are marked off together by themselves more pronouncedly than any other group of the play. They rise up almost like a second thought of the author, since they are not introduced into the action till it is more than half over, appearing first in the Fourth Act, Scene Second. It is true that constable Dull has at the start a little piece of business, which, however, may be a later interpolation. At any rate our Stratford group do not get fully

into the movement of the drama till the last Act, in which they occupy a pivotal place and perform their real function. Why such tardy use of them? The answer involves a new set of characters which we shall next consider.

2. *London.* Only in the capital city could the poet have met with the second group composed of those foreign men—Don Armado, Moth, Costard, all of them nominally South Europeans, in contrast with the pure English Stratfordites. Don Armado is described in the play as “a Spaniard that keeps here in court, a phantasime (fantastic), a Monarcho”, which last epithet identifies him with a well-known London eccentric of that time. In spite of chronology one cannot help putting him alongside of Don Quixote, Cervantes being Shakespeare’s cotemporary. Don Armado is the military pedant, and in his way represents Spain, then the first war-making nation of Europe, which threatened Northern Protestant lands, especially Holland and England. Also his name and character connect him with the grandiose Spanish Armada (often called Armado) whose huge bellicose bubble dashed itself to pieces against Britain’s ships and rocks in the poet’s time. Moth, his minute page, whose little tongue slashes so keenly, is supposed to get his name from the French ambassador, La Mothe, a familiar figure at Elizabeth’s court. Costard is the French-sounding numskull, and seems to run on parallel lines of stupidity with Constable Dull, the dullard of the Stratford trio. To these

London foreigners must be added the female named Jaquinetta, an unsavory morsel, who could not on moral grounds be associated with those English upholders of the Church, School, and Law in the paradisaical country town of Stratford.

Much ingenious interpretation has been lavished upon Don Armado, who thus has shown the power of creating literature as well as laughter. His bombastic word-puffs, his Spanish Gongorism or English Euphuism, are specially emphasized; in him Spain's native grandiosity is burlesqued by its English foe, here voiced by the dramatist. Moreover this group is introduced at the start of the play as a kind of travesty and anti-climax to the somewhat monastic lordly Academe, being parodied as the obverse very realistic side to that Platonic idealism.

But when the poet proposed to give a dramatic presentation of the Nine Worthies as his finale, he found that the present London group were totally unfit for his plan; so he brought into his action somewhat abruptly his learned Stratford group of pedants to finish his work. Hence we find two sets of caricatures in his drama—that of pedantic erudition and that of pedantic militarism. In both groups our poet lets loose his Rabelaisian humor; one thinks that he at this time must have been looking into the great French caricaturist, to whom he alludes elsewhere. That striking name Holofernes as well as the character can be traced back to Gargantuan Rabelais, though Shakespeare knew

the pedant at first hand in Stratford. He must experience before he appropriates.

3. *Italy.* Permeating this drama everywhere is felt a strong Italian influence, though there be in it no national representative of Italy. In fact its whole argument plays around the Italian Renaissance in several of its phases, indicating how it affected Southern Europe as well as far away Northern England, and especially the renascent English poet Shakespeare. Already we have seen him satirize in this play its negative side of hollow pedantry; but he will also manifest its positive side, particularly in its poetic overflow.

In fact we may hear a personal undertone of the poet's own experience in his admiration of Venice whose proverbial praise he cites in the original (as corrected by Theobald): *Vinogia, Vinogia, chi non te vede, ei non te pregia. O Venice, O Venice, who has not seen thee, prizes thee not.* A little exuberance of Shakespeare's own heart as he recalls the Italian sea-city we may well note here, being a kind of prelude to what he will do with it in *Merchant of Venice* and in *Othello*, and possibly in *Measure for Measure*, whose Vienna seems at some points to be a sort of mask for Venice. For in these three future plays he appears to commune directly with the inmost Venetian city-soul, and to re-create its peculiar atmosphere in speech, which could hardly be achieved except by immediate personal vision and appropriation. Do we not go to Shakespeare still

to catch the spirit of Venice in words, as we seek its expression in color by viewing the works of Titian and of Tintoretto, and of her other great painters? And is it pushing too far when we think to hearken in his foregoing praise of Venice the poet's own confession, that he must directly and sensibly see the wonderful city in order to appreciate and then reproduce its elusive soul-life? Surely he has first to experience Venice before he can realize it dramatically—which means the trip to Italy.

But that which chiefly conjoins Shakespeare to Italy is the poetry of the Italian Renaissance, with its love rhymes, and especially with its sonnets, of which a number are interspersed throughout the present action. So it comes that the work before us specially interlinks with the total Shakespearian sonnet-sequence far more deeply than any other play; in fact this Italian strain of it has a tendency to pitch over into mere sonneting at various points. Still it represents only one phase or period of all the sonnets, which are a kind of diary of Shakespeare's whole poetic career. For his sonnets mirror the personal counterpart of the comic, tragic, and redemptive stages of his entire Life-drama. Also the Dark Lady now definitely appears—the real heroine of the Sonneteer, though there may be besides her two or three lesser female personalities.

4. *Navarre, or The Academe.* For some reason the poet now shuns local Italy, in spite of the

play's Italianized poetry, culture, and general atmosphere, and he throws his scene into Navarre which is situated chiefly in the South of France and extends into Spain. We might think him dallying over the old Provençal love-world with its troubadours, but it can hardly be dug out of any intimations here. Accordingly we may suppose that the poet took a dramatic advantage of the great English interest in Henry IV, King of Navarre, and the Protestant hero of France, who won the battle of Ivry in 1590 over his Catholic foes, and whose name and deed are still known and declaimed by the school-boys of Anglo-Saxondom, rehearsing young Macaulay's spirited verses:

Now glory to the Lord of Hosts from whom
all glories are
Hurrah! hurrah! for Ivry and King Henry
of Navarre.

Queen Elizabeth is said to have sent 4000 soldiers to help the Protestant French king, who three years later turned Catholic (1593) about the time of Shakespeare's visit to Italy, probably by way of France and possibly of Navarre. But the poet avoids any notice of the religious conflict, in accord with his habit of shunning the great Catholic-Protestant strife of the age, with two or three possible exceptions. On the contrary he makes his theme wholly secular and cultural. Says the King here:

Navarre shall be the wonder of the world,
Our court shall be a little Academe,
Still and contemplative in living art.

The answer of one of these associated philosophers may be taken as typical of all of them :

To love, to wealth, to pomp, I pine and die,
With all these living in philosophy.

Religion thus has no direct part in this "New Life", which hints a prevalent dream of the Renaissance to re-establish the old Platonic School of Athens, whereof an example was famously given by the Florentine Academy established about 1540, and much reputed at the time of Shakespeare's visit to Italy. The dream of the King of Navarre is to turn his state into a kind of Platonopolis, an institution which the philosopher Plotinus once thought of creating as the realisation of Plato's ideal Republic, and which was to be ruled by philosophers. Here we may add that Shakespeare shows his Platonic bent and study in a number of sonnets, for Platonism was a learned fashion or freak of the time, also chiefly imported from Italy. In fact the claim has been made that our poet somehow got tinctured with the philosophy of Giordano Bruno, who was burned for heresy in 1600 at Rome.

From this point of view *Love's Labor's Lost* gives many interesting glimpses of Shakespeare's eager learnings and imaginings during the present Epoch.

Nor does he fail to acknowledge his deeper motive as voiced by the King :

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives
Live registered upon our brazen tombs . . .
And make us heirs of all eternity.

But now appears a mightier power than Lore, even than Fame the eternizer, namely Love, most beautifully and indeed irresistibly incorporate in the Princess of France and her three grand Ladies, who proceed at once to storm and to capture the celibate fortress of Philosophy, whose once defiant inmates they subject to their loveless ordinances.

Let it also be noted that here Shakespeare shadows forth his own experience, for all through his Italianizing sonnets and dramas and epics runs the over-mastering might of Love. And the Renaissance as a whole, with all its erudite classicism and philosophy, utters its deepest and realest self in the amatory strains of its poets and novelists; over-much religion it was not afflicted with. The World-Spirit then indwelling Italy was in love; Shakespeare's genius, originally love's own, became impregnated with its Italian expression there, and brought the same home to his England.

We feel more reconciled to the hodge-podge of *Love's Labor's Lost*, when we find that its scattered dramatic protoplasm contains a greater number of germs of the coming Shakespeare than any other drama under his name. It overspans a large fragment of his early creative life, being almost a

complete treatise of Shakespearian embryology. To discern these notes, you have to use your microscope, and furthermore to put in order their atomic sport; if you are averse to that instrument, as many are, you had better leave this play to one side. It has a unique bent of turning to a sonnet-drama, and therein connects with the poet's long sonnet-sequence, and also with *A Lover's Complaint*, as already noticed. His delight in Italy, especially in Venice is marked; at the same time his passion breaks out for the Dark Lady, whose name is here Rosaline, whom he also glimpsed in *Romeo and Juliet*. Quite similar are these two portraits in a number of features, especially in beauty's haughty disdain for her lover, be he Romeo, or Biron, or Shakespeare, or all three in one. A great evolution lies in this love of Rosaline as it keeps unfolding and expressing itself in the poet's Life-drama, whose other side or subjective underworld it reveals, sometimes sunlit, oftener clouded.

It is reasonable to infer that Shakespeare regarded this singular work of his pen with a personal favor, since he took the trouble to make a "newly corrected and augmented" copy of it for the printer: such is the fact indicated on the title-page of the Quarto published in 1598. In like manner it is stated that the Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* was "newly corrected, augmented and amended" for publication the next year, 1599. Still further, the second Quarto of *Hamlet* (1604)

is also "newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was". These three documented facts cause us to infer that Shakespeare has won his reading-public, and does not propose to confine his genius to the play-house. The test has been fully made; his vaster constituency of readers has already risen upon his outlook.

Over and over again in this play, as well as elsewhere the poet has suggested his own psychology and poetic first principle: the immediate experience of the object, while erudition or transmitted lore is but an aid at best:

Learning is but an adjunct to ourself
And where we are, our learning likewise is:

In fact *Love's Labor's Lost* often vents a strong reaction against the crammed traditional education in favor of the original spontaneous self, which is here manifested in youth's primordial love of woman:

From woman's eyes this doctrine I derive
They are the ground, the books, the Academes,
From whence doth spring the true Promethean
fire,

that is, the fire of creation, especially the poetic, re-enacting that story of old Prometheus, the man-former:

Never durst poet touch a pen to write
Until his ink were tempered with Love's sighs.

Thus Shakespeare as Biron confesses all the varieties and tortuosities of his new experience, giving quite a full psychology of his Ego, now under the goad of his true Promethean love which will drive him to a fresh world-creation.

Schoolmaster Holofernes does not like the new-fangled Italian poetry, so he is introduced criticizing the sonnet and belittling its worth in comparison with the grand classic example glorified in his shout of admiration: "Ovidius Naso was the man", and not your Italy's poetasters; that is, Ovid was the poetic darling of the Stratford School. Such is the pre-Italian note of the old pedagogue, whose limited lore young Shakespeare shows himself to have far transcended in the present drama.

III. *Histories of the Present Epoch.* We have now reached the national portion of the Shakespearian Pan-drama, those plays listed simply as Histories in the First Folio, ten of them as there set down. This dramatic form is in origin the most English of all the work of Shakespeare, who here dramatizes the History of his nation after a model which his nation has evolved, and which he carries up to the highest perfection. Thus he found it already existent but germinal, and he fulfilled it with his genius.

The two preceding kinds of drama are not of English descent either in form or matter; Tragedy and Comedy go back to the old classic world for their starting-point in Shakespeare, however much

they get transformed under his hand. Hence they are far more imitated or derived from the outside than his History, which both in form and content is native to the English soil, even if hints of it may be found in antiquity. So we behold the poet even in this far-outreaching experimental Epoch cling to his own folk's art-form.

Moreover his present stage of writing poetic History simply continues what he has begun in his Collaborative Epoch, the time of his Yorkian Tetralogy, which has been already set forth as the beginning of his dramatic authorship. Indeed his experience with that stormily tragic age of the Roses made him go back and dramatize its earliest source, in the reign of Richard II. The poet now becomes the patriot, voicing his people's deepest political consciousness, and composing what has been called the grand dramatic Epos of English nationality.

Of these Histories we conceive two, *King John* and *Richard II*, to have been composed during the present Epoch. Again there is no exact proof for the dates of these plays, and hence comes great diversity of critical opinion upon this subject. In this chronological chaos we discern a single steady light-point: one of these Histories, *King John*, shows itself written before Shakespeare's visit to Italy, hence we may rank it as pre-Italian; while the other, *Richard II*, has not a few marks of Italy's influence upon the poet.

KING JOHN.

Some commentators place the birth of Shakespeare's *King John*, after that of his *Richard II*, without proof or good reason we think; besides, such an order violates the historic time-sequence of the two plays. But the deeper ground is that *King John*, in subject and in style, in wording and especially in English patriotism, is closely related to the poet's earlier Histories, the Yorkian group. Still further, one who listens intently, can still hear in it the buoyant echoes of Queen Elizabeth's recent triumph over Spain, and the national glorification after the defeat of the Spanish Armada—a mood which cannot be discerned in the previous four Histories.

Hence it comes that we feel in this play a lurking antagonism to the Southern or Latin world, especially as regards its two institutions, Church and State. England has rejected both, even with sword in hand, and her poet now celebrates the great institutional separation of Anglo-Saxondom from the Mediterranean system both ecclesiastical and political—the consummation of Elizabeth's reign. Hence we assign this drama to Shakespeare's pre-Italian time and mood, from which we shall find him strongly re-acting after his visit to Italy.

Such is the spirit of the present play, which we may hearken in the words of its English hero Falconbridge, especially when he ridicules the foreign traveler as "my picked man of countries"

And talking of the Alps and Appenines,
The Pyrenean and the river Po.

With like purpose, though with a different manner,
the King himself (John) in his earlier more English period denounces the "Italian priest" in England, and even defies the Church's head

Yet I alone, alone do me oppose
Against the Pope, and count his friends my
foes—

which challenge was certainly Elizabeth's, if not John's. Later we shall find Shakespeare modifying his tone, particularly about travel, after that he has himself been a traveler in Italy. His praise of it we have already quoted in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, a production of his post-Italian time.

King John Bull this play might be sur-named, for it is more rampantly patriotic, more Anglo-maniacal than any other work of Shakespeare, though most of his Histories are strongly relished with Englishism. That does not hurt them, to our taste; rather is it just what we should expect and even wish for in the present dramatic species. Accordingly in this play, which voices the prologue chronological of the poet's grand English-historical Pan-drama consisting of the ten dramas or so-called Histories from *King John* to *Henry VIII* inclusive, we hear the key-note loudly and pervasively intoned, namely nationalism and just about the Englishest nationalism possible.

Now it is of significance to note that our poet has had to evolve into this intensity of national feeling through his art. The composition of the Yorkian Tetralogy lies already behind him (*Richard III* and the three Parts of *Henry VI*) as has been just set forth. Hence in the line of his own dramatic evolution, *King John* is his fifth and possibly his seventh effort in the production of English Histories, and thus touches the center of the entire series. But it is placed first according to the strict chronological succession, which is the order of the First Folio and of nearly all editions printed since. On account of this earliest arrangement, which derives doubtless from Shakespeare himself, he must have regarded the ten dramas of English History as one great artistic Whole, the supreme oblation of his genius to his country. On the other hand, in the Shakespearian Life-drama, which is now our theme emphatically pushed to the fore, *King John* is interlinked in the dramatic chain after *Richard III*, and betrays still an imitative undertone of the master, Marlowe. Looking backward as well as peering forward, the poet has here reached a distinct conscious conception of his English Historical Series, which is, of course, still to be wrought out to its completeness in his future years by the addition of five more of these Histories.

Accordingly in the present drama he has introduced a character whose chief function is to proclaim the new national spirit, which really belongs not so much to King John's old time nearly four

centuries ago, as to Queen Elizabeth's, just now being hoored on the horologue of History. This is Falconbridge whose closing speech of the play might be taken as the motto for it at the start as well as for the whole English-historical series:

This England never did nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
But when it first did help to wound itself.

These lines suggest the difference between the two Englands—the former humiliated, self-wounding England, of the warring Roses, and the present united, exalted England now gloriously triumphant over the Spanish Armada, which also menaced both State and Religion. Accordingly the poet introduces and stresses the attack on the independence of the English Nation and Church, not from Spain, indeed, but from France, another Latin people supported by the Papacy. Still the inner national conflict of *King John* was the same as that of the poet's age, and his Elizabethan audience could not help responding to this conflict as its own recent battle.

Moreover Shakespeare had passed through what he here describes. The Queen was excommunicated by the Pope, conspirators had sought to assassinate her at home, foreign nations threatened her crown from abroad, religious disputes kept waxing hotter throughout her realm. The English folk-soul was in mighty turmoil and upheaval from its depths: it was digging up and revaluing its

old transmitted institutions, especially those of government and religion. This younger experience of his the poet has set forth in those deeply turbulent plays of national unrest, which make up his *Henry VI*, whose violent form reflects their violent time as well as their violent characters. But also they hold the mirror up to the earlier years of Elizabeth's reign, whereof Shakespeare had experienced somewhat, making him feel profoundly the national bane of all these dynastic strifes. In fact Shakespeare-Falconbridge in a lofty flight of rapture seems to prophesy the ultimate decline and cessation of royalty itself through its own inherent self-destruction. In these our days of sunken majesties the passage stirs wonderment:

Now for the bare-picked bone of majesty
Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest,
And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace;
Now powers from home and discontents at home
Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits,
As doth a raven on a sick fallen beast,
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.

Some such fulfilment we have just witnessed to-day through Europe's World-War. But thus at the end of his Fourth Act our poet-prophet in far-off foreboding broods over the fall of kingship. Mark now the sudden change: in the following Fifth Act a new spirit rises and speaks through Faulconbridge:

But wherefore do you droop? why look you sad?
 Let not the world see fear and sad distrust
 Govern the motion of a kingly eye—
 Be great in act—be stirring as the time—
 The dauntless spirit of resolution.

In these words we may well hear the voice of the rising national will which is to make no compromise, no "base truce to arms invasive" like those of Spain. Old King John can now be "poisoned by a monk" and gotten out of the way, for the new King John Bull is in the saddle personated by Faulconbridge. And the English people under Elizabeth has made the transition from a time of inner scission and distraction to a time of national unity and of fresh creative power, now uttered by Shakespeare, its greatest incarnation.

Such is, to our feeling, the dominant personal note in the present play, the poet's high-wrought paean celebrating his nation's victory over the Southern or the Latin assault upon the rising Anglo-Saxon world in the North. Somewhat of this oldest and deepest European struggle, that originally between Roma and Teutonia, sends an occasional underbreath, which may be heard in the defiance:

from the mouth of England
 Add this much more—that no Italian priest
 Shall tithe or toll in our dominions.

There is another very intimate gush from Shakespeare's own heart in this play: the lament of

Constance the mother over the loss of her son's future prospect of greatness. The youth Shakespeare, when he married Anne Hathaway, must have heard similar words from his proud, soul-stricken mother so ambitious for her boy whose considerate but anxious answer we may catch in that of Arthur:

I do beseech you, Madam, be content.

The maternal pride of Mary Arden Shakespeare in its deep disappointment may have been capable of suggesting even the passionate words of Constance over her son:

But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy,
Nature and Fortune joined to make thee great;
Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast
And with the half-blown rose. But Fortune, O
She is corrupted, changed and won from thee—

Of course the outer events in the two cases do not tally, but the inner flow of the mother-soul is quite the same in kind, being caused by a like defeat of lofty maternal hope. Constance is indeed a character which distinctly lies outside and beyond the range of Marlowe both in conception and utterance, even when she uses her strongest power-words, as

O that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth,
Then with a passion I would shake the world.

Still there are some passages in this play where we can detect the influence of the poet's great

teacher. Even the child Arthur mid his most affecting prattle mounts now and then into the high stilts of Marlowese, as when he speaks of the hot iron which is to burn out his eyes "in this iron age":

The iron of itself though heat red-hot,
 Approaching near these eyes, would drink
 my tears
 And quench his fiery indignation
 Even in the matter of mine innocence.
 Nay, after that consume away in rust—

which would sound very maturely bombastic and subtly far-fetched in a full-grown man. In fact Hubert's talk is simpler and more child-like than Arthur's in this famous scene, whose overwhelming dramatic power Shakespeare derived from the old play which he appropriated and transfigured, as usual. This old play was named "The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England", and was printed in 1591, which year is not far from the date of its reconstruction by Shakespeare, who must have known it before as a stage-piece, and have ruminated over its fresh redaction in accord with his new poetic principle. Shakespeare's own play of *King John* was not published till the Folio of 1623, where it stands first of the second division entitled Histories, to which it was evidently conceived as the overture. Thus the time of its composition is purely conjectural, and has been varied much by various expositors for a variety of rea-

sons. A number of writers headed by Richard Grant White have fixed on the year 1596, in order to make the date of the play cotemporaneous with the death of the poet's young son Hamnet, for whom the bereaved mother Constance's heart-rending lamentations are supposed to be the father's own for his dead boy:

Therefore never, never, never
 Must I behold my pretty Arthur more—
 Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
 Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
 Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his works,
 Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
 Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form:

all of which throbs straight from personal experience and may have been a later insertion. But the drift of the play as a whole reaches back to the early nineties of the sixteenth century, years before the passing of Hamnet, and is certainly not attuned in its fundamental keynote to a dirge of domestic sorrow.

The frequent military and naval terms seem to waft a recent reminiscence of war through the drama. Who can even to-day help thinking of the defeat of the Armada in this piece of news brought by a messenger of the King:

Be of good comfort, for the great supply
 That was expected by the Dauphin here
 Are wrecked three nights ago on Goodwin
 Sands—

where part of the Spanish fleet perished in a storm. Only some few years before this play's time, William Shakespeare must have heard a similar announcement made to the people of England, which still has its appeal to Anglo-Saxondom.

The underlying theme of the drama we thus interweave with the poet's own time and life. Two characters especially, Faulconbridge and Constance are deeply tinged with his personal experience and receive direct draughts from his purest effluence of genius. With this finest gold is mingled a good deal of foreign material not yet fully fused into his art-work; no little formalism, imitation, undigested tradition still muddies the crystal stream of his originality. Nevertheless we can see the distinctive Shakespeare here as the right dramatist, as the masker and incarnator of his own innermost Self into divers acting individualities.

Still to-day, looking back at the recent World-War, we may hear throughout this play the prophetic note which rings so resolutely in the will-fraught lines:

This England never did nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.

Such was the poet's rapturous forecast of his country uttered more than three centuries ago; but in these last years a far more desperate trial England has undergone than that of those old wars—French and Spanish—with the same final victorious outcome, however. Hence this drama of *King John*

has for to-day's reader a strangely new presaging voice, which our time hearkens out of it everywhere. Yet with one astonishing change: her foe is not now the South but the North, not the Latin but the German, not Roma but Teutonia. A grand new shifting scene of the World's History: what can it mean?

But in the life of the poet behold the sudden metamorphosis! Watch him as he attunes himself anew, turning from his strongly Anglicised to his sweetly Italianized strain, not only in his one drama but in his Life-drama.

KING RICHARD II.

Here is not only the right chronological, but the fitting biographical place of the present play, which along with *King John* represents two successive phases of the poet's biography—phases which appertain to this same second Epoch, imitative, tentative, limit-overreaching. Shakespeare still follows the transmitted model of the English History dramatized, the present being his sixth (possibly his eighth) attempt in this species. And we still trace the influence of his master Marlowe at several different points, one of which we may here premise: probably Marlowe's last play is his *Edward II*, in rivalry with which Shakespeare from certain similarities seems to have composed his *Richard II*.

Still for us the distinctive literary fact of this present play is its Italian mood, feeling, poetic

fragrance; its style is softer, sweeter, weaker than that of *King John*, which has in it, especially in the first half, a right strong display of English will-power and word-energy. Accordingly Shakespeare interweaves here a strain of his spirit's Italy, and Richard II Italianizes himself in the course of the drama through his peculiar artistic temperament. Although on the throne of England, he appears like one of those petty Italian tyrants of the Renaissance, ready to assassinate his own kin by hired dagger or secret poison, ruled by his favorites, and utterly regardless of all private and public right. Still such a tyrant could be and often was a devoted patron of the Fine Arts, in which Italy was supreme; yea, he could be an artist also as well as a right artistic object in himself. Some such creature seems to us this King Richard, a beautiful youth always in the play, however old he may be; often a tender emotional soul interlaid with streaks of remorseless cruelty. But especially was he endowed with an unique poetic gift which radiates shining verses like sunbeams from old Sol, coruscating the brighter as he sinks toward his setting.

What could have turned Shakespeare to portraying such a character, quite singular among all his dramatic personages? We believe that it is one of the fruits of his Italian journey, a dramatic picture drawn from his immediate observation of the fact at first hand. For Richard II is not a thoroughbred Englishman, though he be here Englished by the English poet who, however, has the creative

power of transfiguring his own particular form of nationalism into quite its opposite. It is true that very little is said about Italy in this drama. Still that old-timer York vents his complaints against the King's un-English love of foreign manners, art, and poetry, lamenting that Richard is altogether too fond of

Lascivious meters, to whose venom sound
The open ear of youth doth always listen ;
Report of fashions in proud Italy
Whose manners still our tardy-apish nation
Limps after in base imitation.

Here the open charge is that Richard is Italianizing, against which tendency has evidently risen a strong national protest, which Shakespeare has heard and here expresses.

One void in Richard's soul is specially noticeable: it is his total lack of conscience which is so prominent in other plays, markedly in *Richard III*. No contrition, no repentance, no reaction of the spirit against his guilty deeds can we trace in Richard II. When told that he must confess "the grievous crimes committed by your person and your followers", he questions "must I do so? and must I ravel out my weaved-up follies?" He refuses, defends himself, showing that confession is not a part of his make-up, that he really lacks the sense of guilt, that he as annointed king can do no wrong. One can hardly help thinking of Machiavelli, whose reputation was at its bloom when Shakespeare saw

Italy. Indeed the poet must have known somewhat of that diabolic Florentine counselor of princely iniquity before his trip, for he makes Gloster (afterwards Richard III) boast the ability to give a lesson to "the murderous Machiavel" in cunning and cruelty (III Henry VI. 3. 2.)

I can add colors to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.

How familiar the name and character of this Italian writer must have been, if not to an English audience, at least to the poet, may be inferred from the fact that mine unlettered host of Garter in *Merry Wives* makes the to us learned allusion: "Am I politic? Am I subtle? Am I Machiavel?" Where did Shakespeare pick up the knowledge of Machiavelli? Did he ever read the latter's *Prince*? For he has certainly caught somehow the drift of that famous book which mirrors renescent Italy's political character, whereof the dramatist embodies a leading strain in this King Richard II, who, with his highly developed Esthetic and very deficient Ethic, incarnates strikingly the Italian Renaissance both in its worth and in its unworth.

A number of indirect echoes of the poet's trip abroad may be heard in the present drama. For instance, we can feel Shakespeare's own loss of his native tongue when he touches foreign lands, in the deeply throbbled wail of banished Norfolk:

The language I have learned these forty years,
My native English, now I must forego,
And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
Or like a cunning instrument cased up;—
And dull, unfeeling, barren ignorance
Is made my jailor to attend on me.

Such a strain was attuned after the poet's own experience when on leaving England he found amid a strange folk his supreme gift of self-expression utterly useless and nullified; for what is Shakespeare without his language? Such is the heartfelt note of personal loss here intoned—the greatest of all possible losses, unless he overcomes it by talking to himself and fetching back home that English speech of his, rather the best of human vocabularies. The word-loving banished Norfolk now drops out of the play till we learn of his death, which overtook him after being a crusader

Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross
Against black pagans, Turks and Saracens;
And, toiled with works of war, retired himself
To Italy; and there at Venice gave
His body to that pleasant country's earth—

which passage, really lacking any connection with the dramatic argument, seems here interpolated as an exalted reminiscence of the poet's Italian journey, whose most radiant light-point for him was Venice, of course.

The eulogy on England's worth and glory, which culminates in the dying words of John of Gaunt appears chiefly directed against the Italianizing tendency of his nephew the King:

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself,
This happy breed of men, this little world
This precious stone set in the silver sea—

namely this England, far superior to other lands even to beautiful Italy, is now disgraced and undone by its sovereign through his un-English conduct and spirit. Such is one among numerous signs of an anti-foreign nativistic trend in this drama and in its Elizabethan time. And, the exiled Bolingbroke, who is the coming Henry IV, stresses his pro-English character in seeming contrast with the unnational King Richard rhyming his patriotic refrain:

Where'er I wander, boast of this I can
Though banished, yet a true-born Englishman.

The source-searching student will not fail to read the prose account of Richard's reign in the old chronicler Holinshed, from whom Shakespeare took his story almost bodily. The events, the personages, the purely historic elements are quite the same—yet what a difference! Holinshed has no Italianizing Richard, who is just the supreme poetic

achievement, really Shakespeare's own living self interwrought with long-agone dead history. Watch again the marvelous metamorphosis of prose into poetry :

Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

This is the only play of Shakespeare in which the female is practically left out, perhaps because Richard himself is the woman of it to a sufficiency, being very emotional and subjective, yet full of presentiment and even prophecy. And so the all-lover Shakespeare can write a drama without any love in it. To be sure Richard has a very affectionate Queen, but she is by him neglected and indeed negligible. Sensuous, self-indulgent, when misfortune strikes him he responds with his soul's music, like a stricken stringed instrument. I believe that Shakespeare was deeply sympathetic with this unique creation of his genius, giving therein gleams of his own self-expression, for it was the blow of fate that made him too a poet. Also he was passionately enamored of renescent Italy, but he evidently saw its political and ethical limitations, while he imbibed lastingly of its art and poetry. Richard II is an Italian tyrant of the Renaissance set on the throne of England with the tragic consequences thereof to himself, through which he scintillates as a poet, exquisitely glowing down to a dying iridescence. Life has hitherto been one long *illusion*, so he exhorts himself

To think our former state a happy dream,
from which awakes now our grand disillusion.

In all this diapason of tuneful sorrows there can be heard no real note of penitence, of a conscience-troubled heart; it simply attunes us to the pensive mood of nature as when we view a gorgeously vanishing sunset. But his rival Lancaster who has dethroned and undone his king, feels at once the backstroke of conscience in the deed of guilt, and exclaims to his accomplice

The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labor,
With Cain go wander through the shades of
night,

Lords, I protest, my soul is full of woe—

I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land,

To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.

Wherein we may well hear the moral difference not only between Italianizing Richard and Anglicizing Henry, but also between the Northern Reformation and the Southern Renaissance.

Queen Elizabeth, who also had a decided vein of the Renaissance in her cultural make-up, is said not to have liked this History of Richard II, perhaps as holding the mirror up to nature with too much fidelity. Especially the scene of the sovereign's dethronement seems to have been distasteful to her, for she knew herself giving quite similar provocation, which was followed by similar conspiracy against her throne, though unsuccessful. So it comes that only in the third Quarto printed in

1608 after her death, was the excided deposition of King Richard (Act IV. sc 1), a large toll of a hundred and sixty four lines, restored to its original place in the drama. In the two previous Quartos of 1597 and 1598, her censor had evidently cut out the offensive passage, which seems not to have disturbed the equanimity of her successor, King James. Perhaps here lay one reason why Shakespeare was not all-too-fond of Queen Elizabeth.

Underneath its dainty imaginative sport, there runs a profound institutional meaning through this play—nothing less than the problem of political revolution, when right and when wrong. But now the Italian-minded King is gone, and the English-minded King has usurped his throne, whereupon the fates of History take a fresh turn, and a new Epoch opens with a new Monarch.

Retrospect. Here ends the present Epoch, lasting some five or six years, of Shakespeare's life, with its exceedingly diversified content, which is made up of many poetic experiments, not only dramatic but also epic and lyric. Now from this bound-bursting expansion on the one hand follows a time of equally decided concentration on the other, in which he confines himself to his one literary form, the drama—and even of this he employs not every species, as we shall note more fully later.

But here the student of the poet, looking backwards, is to hold this Second Epoch singly before his mind, and to ask what may it signify in itself,

and what function can it perform in Shakespeare's total Life-drama? The young poet at present drives outward, will enlarge his previous narrow horizons, in fact he starts to universalize himself in the culture of his art which is poetry. If his previous Epoch (Collaboration) is his primary schooling in his vocation's grand discipline, the present Epoch may be deemed his University training. Not that he goes to Oxford or Cambridge, which would probably have ruined his career, but to the University of Civilisation, as this has expressed itself in the poetic development of Europe, whose two sovereign lines of evolution we have already noted as the Classic and the Northern, or as the Mediterranean and the Teutonic. Both these world-cultures our poet during the present Epoch is absorbing, appropriating, and also reproducing in his own multiform compositions. Thus he is testing Civilization itself as the supreme vehicle for unfolding the individual to his highest worth and achievement.

Specially to the educator this Second Epoch would seem to be most interesting and suggestive, inasmuch as here can be seen our greatest Anglo-Saxon Genius going to his own High-School, and following its unique curriculum. Very different is it from that earlier Stratford Grammar-School with its prescribed course for the boy, which, however, is now found everywhere to have been the needful preparation for his present world-embracing self-education.

But enough of this discursive far-branching pedagogy, which has served its purpose for Shakespeare and for us. Though he be still the Apprentice mounting upward toward his final Mastership, a new and distinctive Epoch of his total Apprenticeship has now dawned, which has its own separate right of being set forth as it is in itself.

CHAPTER THIRD.

ORIGINATION

Here begins a new stage of the poet, whom we may now distinctively call the originative Shakespeare, in contrast with the preceding Epoch, in which he had more or less the tendency to be imitative, experimental, dependent on somewhat other than himself. To be sure, he showed his original gift even in his borrowings and gropings after alien forms—the seeming borrower of the unborrowable. Still we are to note henceforth three main independences and new self-reliances: namely in his art, in his vocation, and in his financial estate. That is, he becomes a free man poetically, theatrically, and economically. Thus we may signal the present as an Epoch of liberation for the poet, internal and external, in work and in life.

Accordingly it is possible to hear his Genius addressing him: “No more experimentation, no more imitation, stop writing your Italianized epics, restrict your lyrics to a few stage-songs and tail-rhymes, though you may let your love-life privately gush out into an occasional sonnet. You are hereafter to compose dramas and only dramas, since your ultimate Self, your soul’s own mould is dramatic, and this form of self-expression you have

now won. Cling to it, for it is also the time's right shape and pressure as well as your own. Moreover your whole life is to be one great drama in which I, your Genius, am to find my completed utterance as well as my own highest realisation."

So it comes that the present Epoch bears the stamp of concentration rather than expansion; it is a drawing back into itself instead of a continual reaching out toward something else and somewhere else beyond. The poet has found himself after many voyages of exploration, and takes possession of his grand discovery as a new field of achievement. He has evolved into his basic form of self-expression, the drama, which, however, he is still further to unfold in itself, to its final and completed fulfilment, wherein he will round the total compass of his Life-drama. Let us, then, emphasize here the fact of his unification, which nevertheless radiates itself into no less than eleven different plays.

In this Epoch, accordingly, we list eight Comedies and three Histories, following the classification of the First Folio. And the three Histories, as they are here designated, belong to Comedy or perhaps to Tragi-comedy in their essential character (the two Parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*). Thus we behold Shakespeare during the present Epoch confining himself not only to the drama, but to one kind of drama, namely Comedy. He will write no Tragedy during these six years: he indulges and develops his purely comic Genius, which thus

reaches its largest and best utterance, culminating in the most universally comic personality of the Anglo-Saxon world, if not of all Literature, Sir John Falstaff. From this point of view, as well as from others, we may designate the present exuberant spell of the poet as his Happy Sexennium—happy both as regards himself and his labors, and in general depicting happiness after the storm, and before it too, as we shall find out later.

Still it is ours to remember that Shakespeare in this his new departure does not by any means throw away his former winnings. He keeps and develops not a few of the Italian gains of his previous Epoch. Especially in his Comedies Italy remains his chief storehouse for locality, story, color, and in part for character. Thus he is not yet wholly freed of his Apprenticeship to tradition and to imitation.

Here we may hint another turn and far profounder in the present Epoch: the poet distinctly reacts from his previous social revolt, especially in his treatment of kingship; he shows himself more in sympathy with the institutions of the past, especially with State and Church. Hence his attitude toward the two Lancastrian Henrys of the coming time will reveal in him a deeper and more reverent acceptance of royalty than is found in his earlier historical plays so fateful to kings. This pronounced reconciliation with the institutions of his land we should here note well, since we shall find it to tower up in sharp contrast not only with

his evolved lesser past but likewise with his un-evolved greater future.

I. We have, accordingly, reached the significant time in our poet's Life-drama when he has risen to the independent mastery of his art and of himself, and we may add, of his world, manifesting such mastery in his literary works as well as in his private transactions. He has attained financial success, and thus he has won his economic freedom, being no longer bonded to those three slave-drivers of our physical body—food, raiment, and shelter. Very different was his situation when he first arrived in London from Stratford; then he hardly knew whither to turn for a piece of bread, being compelled to the most menial occupations which he could pick up about the theatre. Some nine or ten years have elapsed since that time; just behold his rise: he is becoming the master not only of this little London stage but of the world's stage. In fact he, or one of his characters during this Epoch, will proudly declare "All the world is a stage", especially Shakespeare's stage.

And now it is in place for us to try to bring together in a single rapid forelook this one considerable Epoch of the poet's Life-drama, lasting about six years, as we measure it, say from 1594-5 till 1600-1, without exacting too rigid time-limits. Let us watch him turning into the present Epoch, when he is some thirty years old, and working through it till he passes thirty-six in the full tide of a fortunate career. He has become a successful

actor, perhaps not great; has advanced to be in part owner of a remunerative theatre; but his supreme achievement is that he writes at least eleven dramas, about two for each year of this Epoch—dramas, most of which still keep their place on the stage after more than three centuries. But, what is far more significant, all of them are to-day perused and pondered, as are no other English words, by millions of readers around our entire globe. Seemingly the most immortal of European writ is this of Shakespeare; so we seize it and search it and even belabor it for the secret of its immortality, and therein of our own.

The present Epoch, then, is one of prevailing good-fortune to our poet, though not without occasional clouds flecking its sunshine. Moreover through it plays a dominant note of reconciliation and restoration both within and without, traceable in his soulful speech as well as in his conciliatory deeds. In 1596 it is reported that he went back to his home in Stratford, and this visit is supposed to have been his first one since his departure thence in 1585. His three children and his wife were still living, probably in Anne Hathaway's humble cottage; his father and mother had never given up their house in Henley Street, though sinking into ever-deepening poverty; other kindred were in the town and neighborhood. Especially, one thinks, did he long to see again the mother of his genius, Mary Arden Shakespeare, now getting old, but still active, as she lives yet a dozen years. Could he

forget her care for his early education, which has shown itself the spiritual substructure of his future work and greatness?

Another incident in this connection is unforgettable: the death of his only son Hamnet (sometimes spelled Hamlet), who was buried in the Stratford Church August 11th 1596, having reached the age of eleven years and a half. The sad rite took place doubtless in the presence of the father and his family. May we not suppose that it was the illness of his boy which brought him back to his home, and led the way to his domestic reconciliation, as it often does? At any rate Shakespeare never again forgot Stratford to the end of his days. In less than a year after his son's funeral, May 4th 1597, we find him purchasing the prominent building known as New Place, an aristocratic mansion, a hundred years old and somewhat decayed like the town itself. There was only one larger residence in Stratford, it is said, and herein we may catch a glimpse of Shakespeare's new purpose in life. He will employ his wealth to win the position of being the first citizen of his community, in pursuance of the custom of the time. Also he would enjoy the rank and the display of the titled Gentleman. Records show that he soon starts to repairing his somewhat dilapidated edifice, and to laying out a spacious garden round it in order to beautify its weedy neglected grounds, on which stood the famous mulberry tree planted by the poet himself according to tradition, though long

since whittled into little souvenirs, and eternized in many a storied reminiscence.

Such a deed shows his present spirit, which is that of renewal and restoration, starting from that renovated mansion, and extending to his own family and even to the town itself. For Stratford then was in serious decline, approaching complete poverty. Two large fires in rapid succession had recently devastated the place (in 1594 and in 1595) having destroyed 120 dwelling-houses, so that its citizens had to appeal to the country for help. Bad harvests followed, the people could not pay their national taxes, from which upon petition they were released by the Government. Shakespeare gave his assistance both at home and at London in getting relief for his town; indeed he seems to have been the most prosperous man in it, if not the only one, giving too the best example for its recuperation.

Thus we find him in this Epoch doing his part toward the uplift of his fallen community. At the same time he begins restoring to fresh prosperity his declined family, which had shared the fate of its environing town. His debt-burdened parent, who for years had hardly dared appear in public or even at church through fear of some law-officer, gets sudden relief from all prosecution, evidently by means of the son's timely disbursements. In 1597 we read of a lawsuit brought for the recovery of his mother's mortgaged estate known as *Asbies*, doubtless through the instigation of her returned

boy with his pocket full of money, since old John Shakespeare, the husband, seems to have sunk every penny of hers, as well as of his own, in his various stranded speculations. But the most famous act in this drama of domestic restoration is the poet's attempt to obtain from the College of Heralds in London the titled honor of a coat-of-arms for his father, who thereby will acquire new social rank and prestige, being made over from a fugitive plebeian debtor into a fine old aristocratic English Gentleman. The mother, who comes of the well-born Arden family, is also to partake of the new dignity. But doubtless the chief incentive must be that William Shakespeare himself, though some thirty three years old, would receive through this operation a sudden fresh birth, with patrician blood throbbing through his veins, and with a titled tail-piece tacked to his name.

Whatever we here and now may think of the matter, such ambition for title lay in the worthiest of the blood-worshipful time. But the point which we should especially select and contemplate in these transactions is Shakespeare's spirit, which is seeking to re-build his shattered town and home, to restore his Family and Community, out of their lapsed condition to their happier and better estate. Thus he shows himself in his conduct an institutional man, as well as in his writing, and the great dramatist makes just this life of his at Stratford an actual drama, quite concordant in its deepest undertones with his feigned drama at London. Here

it should be added that he must have found still in his father's home his younger brother, Edmund Shakespeare, sixteen years old in 1596, whom he seems to have taken to London with him and to have trained for the stage, but who died in 1607 and was buried at a London church, "with a forenoon knell of the great bell", apparently in honor of the deceased, now the son of a Gentleman. Two other brothers he doubtless found at Stratford, Gilbert (born 1566), Richard (born 1573), on his return thither, both younger than himself and probably needing a little lift from their fortunate brother, like the rest of the kin and the town. A sister, Joan (born 1569) is to be added to this family group of parents and children, from whom the poet was early separated, but whose experiences of joy and sorrow lie imbedded, even if veiled and transformed, in all his poetry. A little sister, eight years old, passed away in 1579, when the poet was a youth of fifteen; echoes of brotherly and motherly grief over such a loss (here we may think of Queen Constance and her Arthur) may be heard throughout his Life-drama. For the domestic strain of Shakespeare's work is the fullest, deepest, and strongest in it, and could have been derived no whence else but from his own home. Thus his family appeal with its love in all shapes and turns, is intenser and more universal than any other gift of his genius. One may be permitted to think that his separation from the parental hearth, and his undomestic life in London may have caused him to

idealize with so much power the Family during the present Epoch, especially in his Comedies, whose center is Love's chosen woman, and whose main theme is domestic return and restoration after outer obstruction removed and the soul's inner dissonance overcome. Hence these six years may well be deemed the poet's happiest of a life-time, and worthy to be named his Happy Sexennium.

Thus it is here in place to bring to the fore and to emphasize the deeply intoned concordance between Shakespeare's work and word, the heart-singing harmonies uniting his outer and his inner worlds, such as will be heard attuning his poetic self-expression throughout the forthcoming Epoch. Generations of readers and spectators have enjoyed and will continue to enjoy with the poet this happiest time of his life, and they have been enabled to make it their own through his magic power of impartation. Still here we should give warning that this sunlit time of blissful creation with its abiding freedom from death, which hardly dares enter it, will be followed by just its opposite, namely man's darkest eclipse of tragedy ending in doomed mortality's passing-away. But with this one sudden lurch of pre-sentiment, we shall settle back into our immediate outlook on the good time prepared for us by Shakespeare's comic genius.

II. And now having set down the main personal facts and events of this epochal transition of the poet, we shall next try for the deeper causes underlying it, as it did not happen altogether by acci-

dent. Nor did it take place in a day nor in a year, but it followed its own steady pace of evolution toward its goal.

Undoubtedly the time was one of relaxation from the tense effort and even anxiety which continued to harass England during several years even after the defeat of the Armada. For Spain, then the mightiest and the wealthiest power in Europe, kept threatening to repeat the invasion. But by 1594 such apprehension had pretty well died down, so that the whole land felt more frolicsome and so to speak, comic. Then the present Epoch probably spanned Queen Elizabeth's best years, when she was acknowledged at her greatest, when she was more free from outer peril and from internal conspiracy than before or afterwards. Still even now she did not wholly escape a domestic treason, whereof we shall find the poet himself to show some knowledge in his work.

Still for Shakespeare in person this was the gladdest time of all his days—the most harmonious in spirit, the most successful in affairs. Not his deepest, not his greatest we say, but his happiest, as we have the right to infer from his one dominant note of self-expression, which is that of comedy, or of reconciliation of life's conflicts within and without.

Such a state of mind was quite different from what he had ever experienced before. He had been more or less the protester, the recalcitrant, the malcontent, with a bent toward radicalism perchance,

discordant with the transmitted social order. His near companions had formed that wild set of defiant world-storming poets whose chief was Marlowe, once his master and exemplar. Young Shakespeare without question had shared in their revolt against the accepted institutions of their age, had gone through the mighty experience of social dissent and disharmony, and had sucked that egg dry, being now ready to fling away the shell, and to sweep forward to the next stage in his life's evolution.

But let us call up what a fateful spectacle Shakespeare had witnessed by 1594-5. That whole crowd of rebellious sons of the Muse had before his eyes sunk down to death. Through their deeds they had shown themselves fated, along with their gigantic protagonist Marlowe, whose hapless end in 1593 we have elsewhere recounted. But they all went the same way at last—Greene, Peele, Kyd, Nash—a band of poets more tragic in their lives than the bloodiest play they ever wrote, and they reveled in stage-gore.

We may dare conceive what must have been William Shakespeare's most poignant thought as well as his tensest resolution when he looked upon that real tragedy of his nearest associates enacted on life's theatre. He questions his own oracle: "Shall I too be fated along with them?" We may hear his answer in his work as he turns over a new leaf in his book of cardinal resolutions, and starts upon the present Epoch which shows a decided reaction against what he has been and done hitherto.

We shall find him in this Epoch more and more preservative of that social and institutional order which has been established of old and handed down from the past, and against which he has hitherto been in a state of decided tension, if not of open conflict.

Accordingly the question will rise up: how comes it that Shakespeare too did not perish with his companions when he was in the same boat plunging netherwards over the cataract? Can we detect the saving element that lay in him specially as distinguished from them? More particularly, what held him back from the fate of Marlowe, for years his teacher and indeed prototype? Our answer is Conscience. We have noticed deeply urgent through quite all his works hitherto, even in his earliest *Henry VI*, and most emphatically in his diabolic *Richard III*, the voice of Conscience, that secret critic and monitor of the wayward and errant Self in the man, that hidden counterstroke within him to the negative conduct of his dramatic associates. As already set forth, Marlowe is hardly aware of Conscience either in his works or in his life, and the same must be said generally of his group of fellow-poets. But Shakespeare knew it well, felt its keenest thrusts, and recorded them in his salient characters, as a portion—and, as the matter turned out, a saving portion—of his deepest experience.

We have already remarked and shall have often reason to repeat that the poet partook of the most searching spiritual movement of his age, namely

Puritanism, from which sprang this new energy of Conscience among the English folk. To be sure Shakespeare doubtless shunned and laughed at and even satirized the vagaries of the Puritans, and he also opposed their excesses; still the workings of the Puritanic Conscience as well as the language of the Puritanic Bible (in the Genevan version) can be traced throughout his whole written Life-drama.

III. Here we cannot help feeling attuned to take yet another look at Christopher Marlowe, our last look perchance, for he now disappears personally from Shakespeare's dramatic career and life, and from his own. Through all this long Apprenticeship of our poet, we have noticed Marlowe leaping to the front at its salient conjunctures. Verily he seems to be the first promoter and Promethean artificer or shaper of Shakespeare's primordial protoplasmic Genius. Without him and his preliminary creative work, we can hardly conceive our supreme dramatist to have been what he was, or perchance to have become at all. It required a Marlowe to develop a Shakespeare—a fact which has its striking parallels, and thus by no means stands alone in literary history.

Still the present final influence of Marlowe is altogether different from his previous import. For he now becomes the source of a strong reaction and remonstrance in his former pupil, who faces about to the opposite—turns to the conservative instead of the radical, to the defender of tradition instead of its assailant, to the upholder of the exist-

ing order instead of its adversary. Indeed during this Epoch Shakespeare gets to be a direct participant in man's transmitted social system, he becomes a large property-holder, returns to domestic and communal life at Stratford, seeks a new social title and rank, and so evolves into a completely conscious institutional man. Thus he is the anti-type of his former prototype Marlowe, in fact of his former Self, especially during the earliest Epoch of this his Life-drama.

It will be worth the while to take a brief review of the leading phases of the mutual relation between Marlowe and Shakespeare, the literary Dioscuri of this world-compelling Elizabethan age, verily the twin sons of Zeus, born together in the same year (1564), not indeed of the same physical mother but of the same womb of Time. But the one perished early (like mythical Castor or real Keats, Schiller and many others) with career unfulfilled, while the other Olympian brother Pollux (Shakespeare, or Goethe) was destined to achieve the full cycle of his Life-drama. Still they remain twinned in immortality, and continue to revolve about each other quite inseparable, the unfulfilled about the fulfilled, or the phantom ever circling the reality.

There is little question that young Shakespeare witnessed the early presentation of Marlow's *Tamburlane*, and therein beheld a gleam of his own future calling. Then followed, in that first Epoch already set forth, his collaboration with Marlowe

as master and model, from whom he wins the new dramatic verse-rhythm, the mighty line, and the magnificent word as well as the Titanic characterisation and spirit of the world-defier. He learns to reproduce with increased power the Marlowese super-man, whom we may see best as demon Richard III. But in the Second Epoch the hitherto intergrown brain-twins, the two poets, separate from each other, become individualized, independent yet interdependent, each following his own orbit, but both still revolving around each other in a common attraction and repulsion. This time lasts some years, with much significant creation on both sides, whereupon the one luminary becomes suddenly extinct, and the other speeds aloft along his way alone, entering upon the present new Epoch which is very different from what has gone before.

But we are not to think that Marlowe, though no longer at hand in living presence, is without influence upon Shakespeare. The failure of the Genius often leaves a deeper mark upon men and upon time than his success; the Moscow defeat of the conqueror becomes the greatest event of his life, and only a Napoleon could bring upon himself such a world-embracing personal eclipse. Marlowe's own tragedy left a larger and more lasting impress upon Shakespeare than any of his plays. For Shakespeare is now determined through Marlowe and his fate to strike into a new path which leads in the opposite fateless direction. Hence comes what we here have called our poet's reaction; he

will evolve himself into what Marlowe was not, and will spiritually develop gifts which Marlowe had not. He will specially cultivate the Comic Muse whose inspiration lay outside of Marlowe's genius; he will portray in deepest love and admiration the woman-soul for which Marlowe has little real appreciation or homage; finally from the mighty non-conformist Marlowe reveling in defiant revolt against established authority, Shakespeare will turn the poetic conformist and upholder of the constituted world of Society, Church, and State. We shall see him advance from the judgment and the dethronement of worthless kings—caitiff John, monster Richard III, elegiac weak Richard II—to the enthronement of Henry IV and Henry V as heroic royalties. Such is, to our mind, the outer transition as well as the inner transformation of Shakespeare out of his previous into his present Epoch.

But even during this time and mood of reaction and opposition, Shakespeare does not forget the great worth of Marlowe, of whom we may still catch him breathing many a heartfelt reminder, especially in certain Sonnets. Some unique touch will force the reader to exclaim: "There! Shakespeare is thinking of his old master." One Sonnet in particular seems to be a glorifying recapitulation of Marlow's distinctive qualities, as the writer looks backward in deep recognition, yet not without a strain of rivalry (No. 86):

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all-too precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew!
Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No! neither he nor his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
He nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
As victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence,
But when your countenance fil'd up his line,
Then lacked I matter; that enfeebled mine.

Certainly Shakespeare could exalt no other contemporary poet but Marlowe for "the proud full sail of his great verse", or so strikingly characterize "his spirit by spirits taught to write above a mortal pitch", thus stressing his superhuman Titanic fetches of inspiration. Even his group of collaborators seem darkly suggested, being "his compeers by night giving him aid". Some have conjectured Chapman to be this rival poet, but he can fulfil no such lofty description, even with his famous translation of Homer, of being able to "inhearse my ripe thoughts in my brain".

So much may reasonably be affirmed; but now rise the difficulties of this Sonnet. Who may be the "all-too precious *you*", proclaimed to be "the prize" which the poet is "bound for" in his quest?

Many conjectures: some man or woman, some ideal or thing of reality. Thus again we face the ever-recurring pronominal problem of the Sonnets generally. Three pronouns are here interwoven in its fibre: the acknowledged *I* (Shakespeare, certainly), the supposed *he* (Marlowe probably), the mysterious *You* (cause of multitudinous dubious guesses in the commentators). As we look at the situation, the poet is here taking a retrospect of his early relation to Marlowe, and assigning the reason why he was overwhelmed to silence by the latter's co-ercive genius with "his compeers by night giving him aid":

I was not sick of any fear from thence,
But when *your* countenance fil'd up *his* line,
Then lacked *I* matter; that enfeebled mine.

Shakespeare seems to confess that he had no fear of the preponderance of Marlowe's genius, except that one time "when *your* countenance fil'd up *his* line", probably an allusion to the first effect of witnessing *Tamburlane* on the young poet, who naturally then felt his own "lack of matter" and immature feebleness in comparison with his master's "mighty line", as Ben Jonson has famed it. So much we can see and say in regard to the purport of this Sonnet, without specially hunting down the noun for its elusive pronouns *you* and *your*.

In general Marlowe's lot was to be the precursor and prophetic harbinger of a greater than himself;

just that indeed has given him his larger immortality. To-day we cannot read genetically Marlowe's plays without feeling that Shakespeare is his true fulfilment and realisation.

IV. This Epoch has, we may again emphasize, no tragedies among its eleven dramas, which at present constitute the poet's sole activity. He becomes now and remains henceforth purely the dramatist to the end of his career. The rhymed Italianized poems of the previous Epoch fall away forever, and even the little jingling couplets in his plays keep getting fewer. His lyricism of love finds vent in the ecstasies of his blank-verse, which often rises to song's attunement with its own secret consonances. Still beneath this overflowing dramatic stream, little melodious pulsations of his under-life will bubble up almost in spite of himself, throbbing brief emotional jets of his deepest personal experience in the form of the Sonnet.

Hence we shall follow the movement of the present Epoch along the three fore-mentioned lines—Comedies, Tragedies, Sonnets,—remembering, however, that they are all attuned to one fundamental key-note, that of final triumph over obstacles, and reconciliation after inner and outer conflict. We are never to forget that in life and writ it is the poet's Happy Sexennium—not his greatest time of productivity, but his happiest.

Again we would prompt our thinking reader that it is worth his while to grapple this Third Epoch by itself, and to formulate its distinctive purport

separately with its own designation. In like manner, we have already craved him to scan the meaning and the connection of the foregoing Second Epoch, which shows such strong contrast to the one which we now enter upon. But from that out-reaching diversification this is now the turn to inward unification, which is of a special kind: it is the poet's reconciled time and the expression of the same in the drama, yea in one sort of drama, the comic.

I.

Comedies.

Specially we are now to treat of that class of the poet's Comedies which are embraced in the present Epoch only, inasmuch as they have their own separate character, and reveal their author passing through a significant stage of his evolution. He wrote other Comedies both before and after the present time, but they have in his life a different office, if not a different meaning. Already we have seen him testing himself in numerous literary forms, among which is the comic, and in his last Period we shall find him returning to Comedy but of a deeper strain, in accord with his new and deeper experience. From the list of the First Folio we set down eight Comedies belonging to the present Epoch, which constitute altogether the largest and most diversified part of his work during this Happy Sexennium. Thus man and the world now

turn comic to the poet; indeed we may say that for some six years henceforth Shakespeare's Universe becomes one great Comedy.

Still we are not to forget such a merry and reconciled spell is but a part, but one scene of his total Life-drama, being interjected as it were between two tragic periods of creation. The time of *Richard III* and of *Romeo and Juliet* lies behind him, but the immortal pangs of his greatest Tragedies, *Hamlet* and *Lear*, are yet to come, bringing to the reader the profoundest problem of all Shakespearian psychology. Why should our poet have to turn tragic again, more deeply tragic than ever? With this single outlooking glimpse, let the question drop for the present, since we have next to take a stroll through Shakespeare's purely comic domain with its varied poetic strains made up of life's dissonances overcome.

In general, Comedy starts with some disturbance or obstacle, or with some kind of a perverted world, which, however, is to be restored from its perversion, saving itself and its characters in the process of the drama. Thus its basic note in Shakespeare is mediation, recovery, renewal out of some unto-ward experience, which may result from human frailty, foible, folly, illusion, or even wrong. Hence the comic movement in its wholeness is remedial.

As regards the eight Comedies embraced in the present Epoch, we are hardly able to date them separately to the precise year, since no existing documents are adequate for such a purpose. Still

it is possible to arrange them in three chronological groups, which also correspond to their general purport, as well as to the poet's special development.

FIRST GROUP. Somewhere between 1594-5 and 1596-7, we place three early dramas which have enough in common to be clustered into one fascicle. They all have a certain setting in illusion or in a dream-world. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be put down as the start, or as the overture, which gives the key-note even in its title. Its action moves out of real life into fairy-land which is made to appear when the characters lie asleep in a wood. In such a setting, then, the play turns to a comedy of intrigue with its complication and solution. Thus the drama is enacted in the world of illusion, is indeed a deceptive vision into which we wander and out of which we are restored. The flight to an ideal realm, which is so strongly marked in this play, is specially to be noticed since it is often repeated by Shakespeare under diverse shapes, and must be regarded not merely as one of his artistic devices, but as a living experience of his spiritual life.

Next in order we may consider *The Taming of the Shrew*, whose action is likewise placed in a framework of illusion which is supposed to be the product of intoxication, not of fairy-land. Before the drunken tinker Christopher Sly is played a high Shakespearian Comedy of intrigue whose scene is set in Italy. Here accordingly are found the poet's two main dramatic elements—the elevated cultural life of the South and the humble rude life

of the North—in the form of a play within a play. Thus the function of the drama is to make “the beggar forget himself” through the illusion of being a “mighty lord”, and he comes to believe what is told him:

These fifteen years you have been in a dream ;
Or when you waked, so waked as if you slept—

dwelling in a kind of double consciousness.

As to the traveled life of Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* contains some of the best evidence of his having been in Italy. The familiarity here shown with Italian localities, customs, characters, even household furniture, could hardly be acquired through any other means than personal experience. For a little instance, I believe Shakespeare caught up that very Italian conversational word *basta* (*enough*), from its home-land where it is so common.

The third drama belonging to this early group, and the most Italianized of all his works, is the well-known *Merchant of Venice*. While the dream is not directly introduced, the setting is now a kind of dream-city, which still remains one of the peculiar charms of Venice upon the stranger. The date hovers about 1595-6, according to most expositors, and suggests the poet's Italian time, which here shows its finest flowering. But that which makes the play eternal is its two characters, Portia the mediatorial woman, and Shylock the Jew, who is transformed from the Barabas of Marlowe, the

prime poetic genius still showing himself an elemental power in Shakespeare's development.

Thus the reader is made to feel that *The Merchant of Venice* overflows with the poet's own self at his happiest. Portia certainly gives the fairest picture of his love-life at this time realized in the woman, while Shylock brings to the highest and purest point his Marlowese gift of expression. Then the play in its atmosphere and color seems the very bloom of his Italian memories.

MIDDLE GROUP. Here we place two Comedies of Shakespeare who has now reached his Falstaffian mood of creation—*Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Twelfth Night*. They belong to the time of the Lancastrian Trilogy, *Henry IV* in its two parts and *Henry V*, which were written during the years 1597-9. Thus the Comedies and the Histories of the present Epoch interweave at this single point in a common character, which is comic, and by such agreement bring to light their one underlying principle, which has been already designated as Comedy. Falstaff is really the dominating figure, if not the hero of the five mentioned plays. He represents the underworld of sense challenging and outdoing the overworld of spirit, perverting the same to the opposite of itself and so making it comic. From the prevailing realm of illusion, or the ideal dream-life of the foregoing group, we are now to enter the Comedy of sense-life, very real and often gross in feature and utterance.

The first play here to be noted is *The Merry*

Wives of Windsor, to which Falstaff has been directly transferred from *Henry IV* without a change of name. Tradition has handed down that the work was written "in fourteen days", by order of Queen Elizabeth, who wished to enjoy Falstaff in love, or to see how the old sensualist would conduct himself toward married women in a small town. The play is based upon Shakespeare's observations in three different localities—Windsor, London, and especially Stratford. All these places are in England, which can have no high-toned Italian group speaking in elegant blank-verse. Prosaic English common folks furnish the characters as well as the social environment. The Southern cultural life is quite left out—the only instance in all these Comedies. To be sure Italy may have furnished the leading incidents and the main plot, which are said to be derived from the Italian Straparola; but the names, places, and persons are tricked out in English home-spun.

Still the real central experience which gives vividness and humor to the play, springs from the poet's early life in his native town, Stratford, whose taverns and tap-rooms, more than thirty in number, could easily duplicate the whole reveling crew headed by Falstaff. In that town, too, Shakespeare saw and knew the Welsh schoolmaster, and doubtless recited lessons under his ferule; Sir Hugh could hardly belong to Windsor, but naturally to the borderland near Wales, where lies Stratford. Hence it comes that on certain lines

this *Merry Wives* may be deemed the most biographic externally, though not internally, of all the poet's Comedies.

The second play of the present group illustrating the Comedy of sense-life, or of physical appetites is *Twelfth Night*, whose most characteristic feature is the noisy set of Falstaffian revelers, quite like those of Eastcheap and of Windsor, though Sir John here becomes Sir Toby. Moreover the scene is not set now in a town tavern or a city bar-room, but in the private household of a high lady, the wealthy niece of Sir Toby, named Olivia, round whom as center spins the action. There is the upper line of personages, Italian or Italianized; but the dramatic stress is placed upon the native English crowd of wild merry-makers, whose doings take up quite two-thirds of the play.

Though the poet may have intended to make Sir Toby the leading character, the steward Malvolio has really usurped the first place, so that the play is sometimes titled Malvolio, as if he were its hero. And probably he is the most original personage of the lot, revealing a special relation to the time. For the poet here takes a side-glance at Puritanism, the great spiritual movement of the age, in which we hold emphatically that he shared, must have shared, in order to be the time's supreme poet. Undoubtedly he could laugh at the eccentricities of Puritanism while believing in its true values, as for example, its revived conscience. Thus, to take a modern instance, Emerson ridiculed and even pub-

liely spoke against Emersonianism in its excess, for the support of his own right doctrine. As this play and this character are often cited to prove Shakespeare's personal hostility to the Puritanic spirit, we may briefly look at the supposedly antagonistic passages.

It is Maria, Malvolio's bitter foe in the household, who first says of him, "sometimes he is a kind of Puritan", not because of his religion, which does not directly appear anywhere, but because of the strict fulfilment of his office in restraining the drunken riot, waste, and uproar of the revelers, which she, for her own ends, would tolerate. Such was certainly the duty of Malvolio as steward of Olivia's household. But this same Maria takes back her own words a little later when she says: "the devil a Puritan that he is, or anything constantly but a time-pleaser", an expression which not only denies Malvolio's Puritanism, but on the contrary opposes him to it as regards character. These two contradictory passages, though often quoted to show Shakespeare's hate of the Puritans, may well suggest rather the reverse. For the steward in moral worth is the best person of the lot. To be sure Shakespeare's good-humored protest in favor of moderate enjoyment against Puritanic austerity may be heard in the well known dictum: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, that there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

Not the most winning character in the play but the most conscientious, the most dutiful is 'this

Malvolio, and his mistress Olivia recognizes his value. But just that recognition of his moral merit calls forth his weakness, his folly, his comic foible; Olivia's gratitude for righteous service he mistakes for love, and thus becomes a subject for comic retribution through the unrighteous revelers. But this so-called Puritanism is not the ground of his penalty; nor has he been guilty of wrong or sin, but of a ridiculous absurdity sprung of his "self-love", which possessed him in spite of or just through his overstrained moralism.

THIRD GROUP. We now come to the third and last group of Shakespeare's Comedies, composed during his Happy Sexennium. The transition is somewhat striking, whereof the main point is this: Falstaff and his jolly sensual band of roisterers vanish, and their place is taken by quite a different set of fun-makers. The tavern and its inmates which have been insistently present in five plays (two Comedies and three Histories), are henceforth to pass off the scene, and other social centers of the comic characters appear. So we may say that the Falstaffian world has spent itself, having played its part in the poet's Life-drama.

The present Group, as we construe it, contains three Comedies which we set down in their order: *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well*. The composition of these plays hovers about 1599-1601, that is, after the Falstaffian Group.

Noticeable is the fact that in these three plays

the comic spirit begins to abate; a serious, even a dark and melancholy strain begins to get more prominent and distinctive, though they remain Comedies. Indeed Tragedy starts to peep out of the poetic treatment, undoubtedly reflecting the present mood of the author, and hinting whither he is moving. Especially is such a change observable in the lower native or English line of characters, in which Shakespeare shows himself most distinctly and naturally at home.

Still the more aristocratic Italian line of personages representing the Italianized strain of the poet, and indicated by the poetical form as well as by the theatrical setting, is kept up in all three plays, and voices the elevated, genteel, cultural element of the social order.

As the first member of this Group we take *As You Like It*, whose general sweep embraces a flight from social wrong to the primitive idyllic life of the Forest of Arden. Here is the grand curative principle which heals the world of wrong, and then restores the fugitives. Very profound and suggestive runs the undercurrent of this favorite Comedy, which implies that human society may become perverted in itself, and destructive of its purpose, whereupon is to be applied the remedy. Thus the Forest of Arden is remedial, restorative, a kind of spiritual sanatorium both for the individual and the institution.

Still there is one individual who refuses to be cured, who seemingly cannot be restored out of his

negation and pessimism. This is the melancholy Jaques, who is portrayed with such decision and directness that the reader can hardly help identifying him with Shakespeare himself in one of his overcast or cynical moods. Moreover Jaques in a number of points is the precursor and prophecy of the coming tragic Hamlet, the melancholy Dane, who is endowed more deeply and variously with the same world-gloom.

Next after the foregoing play we would put *Much Ado About Nothing*, since treatment and conception are growing darker, though the entire action still conforms to a comedy. The villain now appears and victimizes the innocent young lady, Hero, by blasting her good-name and her hope of marriage, till she be rescued by a humorous variety of instrumentalities. Here again is shown the world of wrong, though there is no flight to an idyllic life for restoration. The Falstaffian band of revelers, once so prominent, has dwindled down to the stupid officials, who through sheer imbecility render an important service. On the other hand Benedict and Beatrice, belonging to the high-toned set, spend their bright sallies upon each other till their unmarriageable wit undoes itself and becomes comic, ending in the mutual self-surrender of love and marriage. Thus we see in this play not merely the wit of comedy but the comedy of wit, its absurdity and final self-negation into its opposite. Verily the poet's comic world is showing signs of evanishment, and his Happy Sexennium is not so

happy as it once was, telling such a forecast of the coming close.

Still one more play, *All's Well That Ends Well*, is to be assigned to this third Group of Comedies though it is far more serious than comic, presenting as it does, a wrenching social problem with a very problematical solution. It winds up, however, in triumph and reconciliation for the daring woman, the wont-bursting Helena, the grand defier of her sex's ultimate tradition. On the whole hers rises up the strongest feminine will found in all Shakespeare, more massive even than that of Lady Macbeth, whose mind breaks down under her deed. Helena is the culmination or rather the farthest extreme of a line of mighty-hearted female characters whose lofty summits overtop all these Comedies—Portia, Rosalind, Helena—who grapple with and surmount fate's sorest opposition, in order to get the man they love. So this Helena may be deemed the female Titan of Shakespeare, whom he hoists up as a colossal figure on the apex of the completed temple of his Comedies. The deepest contradiction of her sex she challenges and overcomes in her way; her very womanhood she stakes in order to win womanhood's prize—love. And all this is done by her not through sudden impulse but with the subtlest far-reaching reflection. On the whole she may be acclaimed Shakespeare's greatest darer, masculine or feminine.

So it comes that she cannot be called a pleasant character—she is too womanly gigantic, too hu-

manly threatening for us poor mortals. And such a play Shakespeare, the expert playwright, must have known would be disagreeable to his audience, quite unpresentable—and still he composed it, not for money or fame—for what then? His genius had to write itself out to its fulfilment. Shakespeare made this drama for his own self-expression, for his fulfilled Life-drama, and it is not the only one of that kind in his works. Rounding his evolution he had run up against the grand antinomy between means and end cleaving human conduct: which fact is suggested by the title of the play, which makes all well if it but end well. Can sin ever be the right instrument to produce virtue? For here is a case “where both (man and woman) sin not and yet a sinful fact”. The problem of conscience which so often crops out along the entire course of Shakespeare’s Life-drama now turns up in this shape: Can conscience be violated in order to fulfil the behest of conscience! Rosalind also speaks of “points in the which women give the lie to their consciences”. The function of Helena is to mediate her soul’s deepest contradiction, and justify the daring proverb *All’s Well That Ends Well*. Did it ever rise in Shakespeare’s own experience to witness the feat and the character of this unparalleled Helena, mightier in will, more demi-godlike than her far-famed namesake of Troy?

Here then we close the series of eight Comedies in whose three Groups we observe a distinct development of the poet. On the whole they put the woman

at the center of their world, of which the mistakes and ills and conflicts she is to reconcile through her ultimate nature, her love. The man in these Comedies plays a secondary role, even the man whom she chooses. Herein the poet drew from his own early experience during his Stratford days; we have already emphasized the superiority of his mother to his father in his home-life. Indeed one questions why Shakespeare did not name these Comedies after the leading female characters, for instance giving to *The Merchant of Venice* the title of *Portia*. Was it some prejudice in the man or in the time? But we are never to forget that on Shakespeare's stage women's parts were taken by male actors or by "squeaking boys"; so it seems the titles also had to be disguised. Still even the listless listener would be likely to detect the discord of a male voice intoning the female love-raptures of Cleopatra.

Here then the poet brings to a close his distinctively Comic Epoch, having expressed himself in eight Comedies, which belong to his Apprenticeship, showing still his partial imitation and appropriation of Italian sources blent with his strong native originality. He might have gone on writing pleasantly and easily such Comedies for the rest of his life, if an altogether new mood, or rather some mighty spiritual compulsion had not come over him, involving a totally different, in fact the opposite form of self-expression. We are soon to see Shakespeare tower gigantically to be the world's supreme

tragic poet, of which change we are yet to probe to the wellhead.

The foregoing account of these eight Comedies seeks not to give any complete explication of their structure, style, and multitudinous characters. They are considered briefly and simply from one point of view: their place in the evolution of Shakespeare's total personality. The inquisitive reader will naturally consult somewhat of the vast Shakespearian literature which has busied itself with these plays, but which lays its chief stress upon the work of the man rather than upon the man's own selfhood in his work. (I may be permitted here to whisper parenthetically to my fellow-student, that if he wishes to see my much fuller exposition of these eight Comedies—with emphasis upon their objective side rather than their personal—he will find it in my book titled *The Shakespearian Drama—Comedies*).

II.

Histories.

We are now to grapple with the three English Historical plays, which belong to the present Epoch, and which constitute one closely interrelated work whose emphatic unity calls up the designation of it as a Trilogy, or one drama in three Parts. These are the *First* and *Second Henry IV*, and *Henry V*. Moreover the whole Trilogy was written in the couple of years lying between 1597

and 1599, at one stretch of time, and under one push of conception and inspiration. The style, the basic thought, and largely the characters remain the same from start to finish, though the excellence is by no means equal; indeed there is a kind of descent in merit from the first play till the last.

In like manner the present Trilogy bears the stamp of this Epoch on account of the stress which it puts upon the spirit's recovery and reconciliation, after a time of conflict and scission. Undoubtedly it reveals socially destructive agencies at work, but it shows them overcome at the close, and thus it is essentially a Comedy, both in each of its three several Parts and in its totality. Here we are to see that this Trilogy of English Histories is at its deepest intergrown and unified with the foregoing line of eight Comedies. In each kind, in the Histories as well as in the Comedies, the outcome is a reconciled lot both of the individual and the institution, even if a dark tragic streak now and then rises to the surface and interweaves itself till it be somehow mediated in the final harmony. Such was Shakespeare's characteristic mood during this Epoch of six or seven years; hence we have christened it his Happy Sexennium.

A word about the use of words in this connection. The mindful reader will recall that we have already had an historical Trilogy, indeed a Lancastrian Trilogy in its three Parts, named after Henry VI, son of Henry V. But that was a very different production in style, thought, and maturity

from the present one; especially the mental stage of the poet creating it was on a number of points quite the opposite. Then Shakespeare wrought madly fermenting in his Collaborative Epoch, being also lashed to emulation by the Titanic genius of Marlowe. That was some ten years past, during which time our poet has undergone much experience, and received from it a mighty development which has been already outlined.

Still it is well to stop long enough to emphasize by way of contrast that Shakespeare's first Trilogy of English Histories, *Henry VI*, mirrors him as reveling in bloody, death-dealing Tragedy, not in happily ended Comedy—as being the embryonic Shakespeare in wild fermentation, not yet evolved into his reconciled mood of dramatic creation, which is the characteristic strain of the present Epoch, and which culminates in this second Lancastrian Trilogy of English Histories. And we may add the reflection that the earlier Trilogy historically is the later biographically, so that he wrote these two groups of plays backwards in time though forwards in life, according to his own spirit's experience, for whose sake he dared reverse the forthright march of History. Hence Shakespeare's youthful fate chose to depict the fate of the son Henry VI long before he did that of the father Henry V, molding the brittle body of old Time into a new shape congruent with his own inner evolution.

Undoubtedly this Trilogy connects back both in

History and in Shakespeare with the play of *Richard II*, which starts its leading motives as well as prophesies its coming and its conclusion. Hence most interpreters not without reason make *Richard II* the overture to the foregoing Trilogy and call the related four dramas the Lancastrian Tetralogy. At present, however, our purpose is to stress the epochal difference between these two compositions in spite of their close historic connection, and to probe to the meaning of this difference for the life of the poet. *Richard II* is decidedly Italianized in style and soul, discoursing sweet sentiment even to the point of sentimentality, while the Trilogy is stoutly and wholly English in spirit and expression. *Richard II* has no comic vein, and no prose, while the Trilogy, has an overplus of both, culminating in Falstaff. Then what a difference between them in the might and the certainty of characterisation and of language!

But the deepest, widest, most essential diversity which separates the two works springs out of the supreme change in the attitude of the poet toward his environing institutional world, especially State and Church. Hitherto he has been a protester against if not a defier of the existent social order, but now he turns about and becomes a conformist and a conservative, which is his part in the present Trilogy. Not so sudden has been the transformation, since he has had three years and more for meditating and fulfilling his spirit's grand metamorphosis. From his anti-institutional trend along

with Marlowe and his wild lawless set of fellow-poets, he has been strangely transmuted into an institutional man and poet. Thus Shakespeare has bridged the chasm across from his previous youthful time of spiritual opposition to the prescribed order of society, and has entered upon his new forthcoming Epoch which accepts and upholds the transmitted establishment both political and religious, as this is poetically set forth in the career of the two Henrys of the present Trilogy.

It is no wonder, then, that Queen Elizabeth regarded Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which stages vividly the dethronement and demise of a monarch, as a revolutionary play, and forbade its presentation before the people at a time of threatened popular insurrection, in which by the way some of the poet's patrons and high-born friends were involved. But why select *Richard II* for royal disapproval when all of Shakespeare's previous English-Historical plays, five in number and covering quite two Epochs of his total Life-drama, show the sovereigns of England called to account, unkinged, and even deprived of life by violence? Such had been the nature of his dramatic contribution in the historic field up to the present. Altogether he has hitherto depicted four English Kings dragged down from royalty and slain: such was his selection of themes, which gives an indication of his spirit. But mark now his change: the two monarchs of this Trilogy, the two Henrys, triumph over conspiracy and rebellion, pacify the land, and conquer the foreign

foe. And they die in their beds at peace externally, if not internally.

Here we may also take note of the transformation in Shakespeare's poetical associates. The old set of dramatists headed by Marlowe have passed off the stage of life in their own life's tragedy, which has been witnessed and taken to heart by Shakespeare, who is now about the sole survivor of that daring denying group, once so defiant of custom, law, and institution. The lesson of their fate he has learned, and he proposes to utter his vast new experience in his own native form, which we may see in the present dramatic Trilogy. For the poet's intensest drive is toward self-expression, giving voice to what he has struggled through in the deepest depths of life. Hence we may say that his time of Storm and Stress is now transcended, having evolved him into his reconciled Epoch, his Happy Sexennium.

But behold, another poetical environment gathers about him, very different from that early band like Kyd, Peele, Greene, and the rest. Shakespeare is now the center, the acknowledged head of the drama, no longer the imitator but the imitated. This new set of fellow-dramatists, of whom he is the supreme luminary, and who shine largely today through his light, may be headed by Ben Jonson as first, then followed by Marston, Chapman, Middleton, and others. They constitute the truly Shakespearian group with its peculiar development and character, stamping the Elizabethan age with

the sovereign seal of the world's literature. Some recent Shakespearian criticism has dug up a speck of news concerning the petty jealousies and feuds among this later group of poets, in whose tiny animosities the great Shakespeare is supposed to have become embroiled. Very dubious is the whole argument, and even if proved, it would hardly be worth its ink. No doubt Shakespeare alludes to a very able rival singer in his sonnets; but the poet who alone might be worthy of such a transcendent recognition has been already indicated—Marlowe.

Another cardinal distinction is here to be pondered: in the Histories it is the man who stands emphatically in the foreground and is celebrated as the hero; while in the Comedies the woman is put to the top, and pedestaled over the man as the heroine. Thus it would seem that these two kinds of dramas are sexed in their way; Comedy here is feminine at its best, while History is dominantly masculine. What does this mean? Shakespeare probably regarded the woman as queen of domestic life, which is the main sphere of his Comedies; but to the man chiefly he assigned political life, which is the leading theme of his Histories. Still elsewhere and at other times Shakespeare has limned us in strong outlines, the political woman as Queen Margaret in *Henry VI*, and Lady Macbeth, and perchance pathetic Constance. But in his present mood, that of the Happy Sexennium, he in general makes the woman the deeply reconciling character of the discords and conflicts of the Family; while

the man is to meet and to overcome inner scission and open rebellion in the State. Thus the two separate sexes he enthrones in the two separate institutions, Family and State, assigning to them respectively his two art-forms, Comedy and History.

At first it causes some wonderment that Shakespeare, lover of the woman-soul, especially during his Happy Sexennium, should reduce to such relative insignificance the lofty ladies of this Trilogy. There is hardly a pronounced character among them, though we catch pretty passing glimpses of several grand dames, most rememberable of whom perhaps is Hotspur's wife with her fondling threat: "I'll break thy little finger, Harry". Strangely the realest woman in love does not now speak English at all, being the daughter of the Welsh chieftain, Owen Glendower, who seemingly has not allowed her to learn that hated Saxon speech which he, however, both knows and sings as a poet. So she has to gabble even on the stage a foreign dialect to her English husband, Mortimer, who cannot understand her, dolefully sighing: "My wife can speak no English, I no Welsh". Again we cannot help thinking that here is another transcript of Shakespeare's own youthful experience in his border home-town, the somewhat bilingual Stratford. Then the next most prized woman, Katharine, speaks a hobbling English-French or a yet lamer French-English.

Queen Elizabeth, that haughty, self-asserting,

all-exacting woman, could find little compliment for herself and her dignity in the poet's treatment of these high courtly dames of the present Trilogy. This fact may also mirror the present mood of Shakespeare toward Elizabeth, between whom and some of the poet's noble friends, especially Southampton, had started during these years a rupture which ended a little later in downright revolt—whereof something more in the future. Meanwhile Dame Quickly, queen of the Eastcheap pothouse, holds her reveling court in all its underworldly splendor throughout the entire Trilogy, being its sovereign woman.

The First Part of Henry IV. The best and most popular play of this Trilogy, and with good reason: it depicts the clearest-cut and largest characters, it is written in the poet's happiest style, it has more unity of action and thought than either of the other Parts. Indeed it would doubtless rank with the greatest six or seven among the author's entire works. But the point which we would at present stress about it, is that it contains in its happenings more numerous and significant glimpses of the personal Shakespeare than any other single one of his dramas. Hence we may well deem it his most autobiographic play, revealing much about himself when the dramatic disguise is peeped under. From this viewpoint we shall take several glances at or rather beneath its somewhat veiled events.

(1) The supreme political or historic fact of

this drama is England's desperate struggle with rebellion. Everywhere we hear the notes of preparation of civil authority against its threatened overthrow. The nation is summoned to defend itself against its own dissolution. The rebellious spirit of the time taints the one supreme family of the North, the Percys, which spirit must be eradicated before any public peace is possible. The protagonists of these two contending energies are Prince Henry and Hotspur, of whom the latter perishes and with himself his cause. Thus the poet in his dramatic way affirms the wrong of revolution and its undoing along with that of its valiant but misguided supporters.

Now the emphatic matter at this point is that Shakespeare in his previous Lancastrian play, *Richard II*, has shown quite the opposite trend, namely toward upholding the right of revolution. There the king is dethroned and slain, and a triumphant rebel becomes monarch. Undoubtedly this is the course of history; but why did the poet successively choose such diverse themes? They indicate the great change in his spirit's development, which took place in the three years or so which lie between these two compositions, as has been already set forth. Shakespeare himself in his life's deepest experience has turned from being a rebel into the stout maintainer of what is established. Thus we stress the pivotal transition from revolt to acceptance, from the right to the wrong of revolution in the Apprenticeship of the poet, from the poetic

ensor of the transmitted order to its dramatic upholder.

Here we are likewise to mark that in Elizabeth's reign during these very years, rebellion was brewing in the hearts of several noblemen of the Queen's court—Essex, Southampton, and others, with whom Shakespeare stood in ties of some intimacy. This whole play may be taken as a warning of the dangers of insurrection blazoned by the poet to his hot-headed blue-blooded friends. In fact Hotspur is pictured largely though not wholly from Southampton, who was also the soldier, the high-spirited cavalier now in revolt against the Queen's authority, for which he will later be condemned to death though not executed, as was Essex. The vivid impression produced by Hotspur springs from the poet's immediate vision and experience; he knew the actual man, and may have served under him a while as a soldier. To be sure, Southampton patronized poetry while Hotspur pretends to hate it, though poetical in his very hate.

Thus an atmosphere of insurrection hovers over this drama from beginning to end, and doubtless reflects the feeling of the poet's environment at the time. But the untoward revolt is suppressed vigorously and bloodily both in the play and in the fact. King Henry's ideal triumph on the stage foreshows the real one of Queen Elizabeth, for Shakespeare's far-gleaming signal of warning was not heeded by those before whose eyes it was flashed. And the poet himself after this Happy

Sexennium will be plunged into an ever-deepening gloom over the tragic fate of his high-placed friends and noble patrons. But that chapter of his life is to come in its order.

(2) Such is what we may call the Established World asserting itself victorious over the inner revolt and disruption of its upper class. But in the drama rises a social appearance quite of the other and lower layer, namely the Perverted World which centers in the tavern of Eastcheap, and whose right king is Sir John Falstaff. It is devoted to all sorts of sensuous indulgence, which perverts both the individual and society from the rational purpose of human existence. It is essentially comic, self-annulling, absurd, and hence in the last outcome, tragic, as we shall note in the fate of Falstaff. And we may well prefigure that this Happy Sexennium is destined, in the poet's dramatic evolution, to turn into Tragedy, when it has spent itself creating and performing its eleven Comedies inclusive of its Histories. But wait a while! upon our poet that stroke of the time has not yet fallen.

The connecting link between these two Worlds, the perverted and the ordered, or between Falstaff's Eastcheap and the King's Palace is Prince Henry, son and heir of the Monarch. Thus the royal youth takes over into himself and conjoins in his own experience the extremes of the social system, the uppermost and the lowest, the positive and the nega-

tive phases of man's associated life. Consequently Prince Henry is the one character spanning the total arch of the play's action; he belongs to both its leading threads, the serious and the comic, the actual historic and the fictional humorous, the court and the tavern.

Now it is this fact which specially makes him in the present drama the true image and the representative of Shakespeare himself, who has recently passed through essentially the same experience in life. For our poet also had taken his purgatorial journey through a literary Eastcheap with his rabblement of reveling poets, as already set forth; and, he, having risen out of it, is now looking backward, proposing to tell about it after his dramatic way. The chief vehicle of his experience and finally of his soul's transformation is just this Prince Henry, though the outward circumstances of the men be directly opposite. But just through this contrast is the spiritual unity of the two penitents emphasized the more intimately. The poet is here telling his change of heart and his confession by means of literature, which thus becomes his ultimate absolution and reconciliation, inner and outer. Prince Henry's palingenesis, which runs through and interconnects the whole Trilogy, is in essence Shakespeare's.

It may be said that the poet has in several passages made his identity with the Prince quite too overwhelming for the good of his drama. Especially in the well-known soliloquy (Act I. Scene 2.)

when the Prince says that "this loose behavior" of his present life is merely put on for a while with design, and that he will throw it off at the right moment, and "pay the debt I never promised", we hear the old experienced Shakespeare looking back consciously to the past, and not the young inexperienced Prince driving forth unconsciously to the future. Hence the character has been pronounced at this point discordant, unnatural, even priggish. But our interest is to watch even the expert dramatist Shakespeare fall out of his role in his zeal for self-expression, since he is the one who has gone through the mill already, and, knowing all about it, can proclaim his good new resolutions in view of foregone bitter trials. But that is not the case with boyish Prince Hal, who has just started to quaff his first draughts of Falstaff's intoxicating word-wine, and to revel in the magic of that all-dissolving comic personality.

Still the whole career of Henry IV, from the riotous defiant Princeeling to the heroic political and religious Monarch, is unfolded with such sympathy of soul and speech that we catch the very thought and tone of the poet here shriving himself after his new-won outlook on life. The entire Trilogy, through which the evolution of Henry V streams from youth to ripest manhood's fulfilment in the deed, becomes a kind of panoramic pageant of Shakespeare's own stages of development, from his early London days up to the time of this poem's composition—to be sure, with a shocking difference

of social conditions, not unlike that between King Cophetua and his beggar maid.

(3) Turning from these deeper currents of the poet's revelation of his own spirit's progress in this drama, we may next glance at some of its more external events which hint of his youthful days at Stratford and their experiences. For instance, the Welsh borderland with its people and their conflicts often lies in the background of the present play, whereof we have already given a telling sample in the furious duel between English Mortimer and Welsh Glendower "on gentle Severn's sedgy bank", which was not far from Shakespeare's birth-town. Indeed the extraordinary vividness of these scenes, as well as certain added strokes, show that the poet took them direct from tradition and from actual life on the border more than from the dry old annalist Holinshed, who tallies down his desiccated events and persons one after the other in due mummied succession. And our good reader has not forgotten (we dare hope) that on a former page we have indicated how the high cavalier Hotspur seems to have had some very humble experiences of cottage-life, quite similar to those of the young husband Shakespeare in Anne Hathaway's rural cabin redolent of cheese and garlic.

Many other little touches of the poet's Stratford time we may trace in this drama, if we take the trouble to look beneath his dramatic disguise into his own heart, which bubbles out of these youthful experiences with intoxicating freshness. It seems

to me that I hear the laddie poet Willie Shakespeare spouting or rather singing those love-ecstasies under the mask of Mortimer, when the latter addresses his Welsh lady-love:

I understand thy looks: that pretty Welsh
Which thou pour'st down from these swelling
 heavens

I am too perfect in

I understand thy kisses and thou mine—

which language (of osculation) was the only one they could converse in with reciprocal intelligence and satisfaction, each being ignorant of the other's articulate speech. But listen to that lover-oath of raptured Mortimer-Shakespeare with its tingling cadence:

But I will never be a truant, love,
Till I have learned thy language; for thy tongue
Makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penned,
Sung by a fair queen in a summer's bower,
With ravishing division, to her lute.

Such is the scene: the young Stratford poet holding a kind of eisteddfod or tournament of song with his Welsh sweetheart in the two mutually unintelligible languages somewhere out on the borderland of England and Wales.

Did Shakespeare himself feel somewhat of that strange supernatural terror which seemed to be homed in the mountains of Wales, and which appeared incarnate in the wonder-working Glendower

whose supposed unearthly prowess made the English shiver with dread? King Henry lets peep his own secret awe, titling the Welsh chieftain "that great magician, damned Glendower", and proclaims that English Mortimer

durst as well have met the devil alone
As Owen Glendower for an enemy.

And Falstaff likewise calls the uncanny Welsh foe "that devil Glendower", and, evidently trembling in lips, whispers to the Prince: "Art thou not horribly afraid? doth not thy blood thrill?" Even Hotspur who makes so much fun of Glendower's supernatural pretensions to his face, shows a good deal of respect for him behind his back. Thus quite a little strain of Welsh and English superstition, or perchance folk-spirit is woven through this drama, all of which the boy must have imbibed at first hand from his Stratford entourage.

Still a striking omission should again be remarked in this connection. A wonderful poetic world over in Wales across the border had many centuries before been built at Caerleon on the Usk, which was famed throughout Europe as the seat of King Arthur's Court along with his Knights of the Round Table. Shakespeare must have heard that legend dozens of times in his youth, for it was current everywhere around him; then in London during his manhood he could hardly have escaped some acquaintance with Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, a much-read romance of the Ar-

thurian circle, and then already a quarry for poets, as recently for Tennyson and others. But Shakespeare seems to shun the great Welsh Mythos throughout his entire works, making to it only a very few brief allusions, and those rather contemptuous. And yet the Arthurian legend has shown its perdurable vitality, for it is still creative to-day in the poetry of Europe and even of America.

The Second Part of Henry IV. This middle play of the Trilogy takes a big drop both in external interest as well as inner worth, when compared with the preceding First Part. Still the general theme is carried forward to its conclusion: the political revolt headed by the Percys is completely suppressed through established authority, while the moral revolt incorporate in Falstaff and the wassailers of Boar's Head loses much of its power through the Prince's conversion and reconciliation with the King, his father, after his final frolic at Eastcheap. Such is, in general, the sweep of the whole drama, wherein we may catch the present conservative attitude of the poet toward the existent order.

By way of contrast we shall cite what may be deemed the play's strongest passage, which expresses in mighty words the universally destructive spirit of rebellion, as voiced by the old revolter Northumberland, whose son Hotspur has already perished in treason's assault upon the constituted government:

Now let not Nature's hand
Keep the wild flood confined! let order die,
And let this world no longer be a stage
To feed contention in a lingering act!
But let one spirit of the first born Cain
Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end
And darkness be the burier of the dead!

Thus the aged anarch frantically invokes the grand cataclysm to overtake the world and its order, and prays that the spirit of Cain, the first brother-murderer, may "reign in all bosoms". These lines, in their sound, style, and meaning, recall the defiant trumpet blast of Marlowe, who also sank down to death in revolt against the world's order. And Shakespeare himself once shared in this challenge of the established State with its kingship. But here he sees to it that the present monarch, though once a throne-getter through Percy's rebellion, now turns about and puts down Percy's rebellion, reversing himself indeed, but vindicating his new-won authority. Thus the wrong of revolution is undone through the deed, by the former revolutionary himself, who puts a stop to further revolutionizing after the success of his own. Still, as if in response to this outer fortune, he has a fearful inner backstroke of conscience.

But when we have properly adjusted everything and everybody, the great outstanding character of this play, indeed the central culminating problem

of the whole Trilogy is Falstaff. For he brings up a peculiar contradiction: he is the poet's supreme comic creation, and yet he turns out tragic, as if the very goal and outcome of Comedy were Tragedy. Falstaff is endowed with high mental gifts, yet he uses them as means or even as slaves for his lower nature. Spirit in him is turned upside down, being made servant to what it ought to master. Dante would have figured him as a monster, half-human, half-bestial, and have whelmed him down into the infernal circle of gluttons or liars. Moreover Falstaff has built a world out of himself like himself, with its inmates negative to all moral subordination. Eastcheap is a kind of Dante's Inferno with its living active Satan.

And yet Falstaff is a pathetic character from the start, and he continually begs for human sympathy. He is full of penitential spasms, on account of which trait he has been dubbed by his hardened companions as Monsieur Remorse. At times his voice trembles, and he seems ready to weep over himself for his sad infirmities. He as it were glimpses his own fate, and sheds a tear at his own tragedy, which he forefeels approaching. To be sure, his changes are very rapid: in a moment he turns "from praying to purse-taking", from compunction to Sir John Sack-and-Sugar, from Saint to Satan.

In Shakespeare's Comedies proper, as already considered, the comic fact lies outside the personality or the self of the dramatic character; it is

some outer mistake of the senses (as in the *Errors*), or some inner mistake of the mind, as foible, folly, frailty (for instance that of conceited Malvolio, shrewish Catherine, love-scouting Benedict). This is what the general course of the comic action has to eliminate, and so to leave the former victim free of his failing or of his absurdity. But in the case of Falstaff, the personality itself gets involved and becomes comic, ridiculous, self-undoing; the very soul tends to be one universal human frailty, which makes absurd and irrational its own existence. Honor, conscience, repentance, the most earnest efforts of man's spirit for self-recovery after the lapse through folly and sin, turn to a laugh, to an effervescent bubble of humor in Falstaff's religion. Yet he is no hypocrite, no skeptic, no blasphemer, but a believer with strong self-condemnation for his perverted life, and with intermittent lofty resolutions for amendment: "I'll purge and leave sack and live cleanly, as a nobleman should do."

At this deepest point of character, he stands in pronounced contrast to his young companion Prince Henry, who sincerely repents, confesses his derelictions, and begins a new life, turning away from Falstaff's Satanic fascination. For the old sinner was undoubtedly a charmer, and still is to-day. Also the King is deeply troubled in conscience for his past actions, especially for his deed done to Richard II; he openly confesses his guilt and will seek absolution through a crusade to the Holy Sepulchre. Verily that royal household has become

the home of prayer, penitence, atonement; both father and son are showing the broken and contrite heart with promise of repentance and regeneration.

Now the enigmatic fact confronts us that Falstaff is going through quite the same penitent process, and yet overmaking it all to comedy, doing so not in mockery but by the very necessity of his nature. Why this supreme comic development just here and now? Falstaff is a product of the time; the whole sensuous element of man breaks loose in him and goes on a universal spree; all things fixed, established, hallowed melt to pieces in his soul's dissolution, which condition springs not from hate or even ridicule, but from a kind of love, whose very law is to break the law while acknowledging it as his dearest conviction.

Thus Falstaff is limned as the antitype of the King in the deepest throes of his spirit—in contrition, confession, repentance. Medieval legend called the devil God's ape; Falstaff too imitates, almost parodies, the divine process of redemption, not as scoffer or denier (like Goethe's Mephistopheles) but as believer. The outer form he knows and repeats; the inner life, the soul's reality is not his, and hence in his present state he cannot repent—he is fated.

So it comes that his body, his external shape corresponds to his character. He is in contour a huge bubble, which is nature's laugh rising into the air and exploding fitfully, sometimes with a detonation, into nothingness. Such is the supreme comic out-

come. Visibly he is all abdomen, with bottomless appetite for sack and capon, which however, is capped with a brain ever-spraying fresh humor whose empty though iridescent globules flash out and then burst into the universal void. Nature herself in his overflowing organism turns to a seen comedy, which already in advance laughs at what he is going to say, giving the cue to the listener. Thus body and mind play the same part together for eye-sight and insight.

In such fashion we seek to conceive the place of the Fat Knight in the author's long and deep experience of life. Shakespeare unfolded into Falstaff and Falstaffianism, and then out of him and his Pandemonium of Eastcheap. For the poet not only saw that bright human bubble of evanescence in outward inflated shape (some have thought they could point to the very man), but he felt the Falstaffian consciousness in his own self, in the evolution of his own comic genius. So he deepens Comedy to its ultimate profoundest turning-point where it reaches its own self-annulment, in which we behold the outcome and the conclusion of the poet's Happy Sexennium. Comedy is pushed to the point of being comic to itself in Falstaff—ridiculous, absurd, self-negative, a bursted bubble.

Henry V. This third and last play of the Trilogy is its culmination, assuredly not in poetic excellence but in that re-actionary conservative tendency which we have already noticed as the tone-giving characteristic of the poet's present

Epoch. Prince Hal, now crowned King Henry V, is transformed into the most devoted supporter of those two supreme institutions, Church and State, both of which he as a youth not simply disregarded but openly set at defiance. And it seems that he has not alone accepted them tamely as something transmitted in the line of his office, but he has studied them profoundly, having become quite suddenly learned both in theology and politics, the sciences of Church and State. For listen to the Archbishop of Canterbury, a good judge of such doctrinal qualities:

Hear him but reason in divinity
And all-admiring, with an inward wish
You would desire the king were made a prelate;
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
You would say it hath been all his study.

And to like extent skilled practically does he appear in war and administration:

So that the art and practic part of life
Must be the mistress of this theoric.

How and when did the young Prince ever get so much knowledge, is now the sudden problem. For nobody ever "noted in him any study", since his hours were "filled up with riots, banquets, sports", his boon associates being "unlettered, rude, and shallow", such as those delectable denizens of Eastcheap. Well may the good Archbishop wonder at this unexpected lore of a youth who seemed to turn

away from all labors of the student; and the enigma remains even after the Bishop of Ely has added his illustrative text: "The strawberry grows underneath the nettle"—so the young Prince grew "under the veil of wildness". But the interest for us now is that Shakespeare himself underwent some such change, seemingly not so rapid, while the problem of his erudition still haunts not a few of his readers who dazedly inquire: Through what strange channel could have come all that learning of his? One well-known answer is: he was not himself but Bacon.

Another singular characteristic of this drama is the stress which it puts upon genealogy, inherited titles, legitimacy. Indeed the whole war with France pivots on a pedigree—a fatal pedigree, as it turns out, even with the victory of Agincourt. In all Shakespeare there is nothing so utterly unpoetical, so mentally desolate as that long genealogical list which is supposed to justify Henry's title to the French crown. One begins to think of Walt Whitman's broad spaces of sandy rigmarole. Such dry heraldry may have charm for the rank-loving English, but it simply mummifies the American reader. Still we may start up some interest in this desiccated part of Shakespeare if we find that it has a place, though small, in his life's whole journey. Accordingly we learn that just during the years of his composing this Trilogy (1596-9) he was engaged in a prolonged attempt to obtain a coat-of-arms, and thus to become a titular English

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Gentleman. In fact the year when he at last received his title after quite a little battle, was 1599, which is usually given as the date of his writing the present drama. So we may think that genealogy was a special experience, or perchance hobby of his at this time, and became interwoven in his Life-drama, whereof the lasting mark was stamped on *Henry V*. And it should be added that the purchase of New Place, his gentlemanly residence at Stratford belongs to this same genealogical time (1597). Underneath all these superficialities we may discern Shakespeare's present trend toward the transmitted, the conventional, the titled in his environing social system.

And now in this drama we are again brought face to face with the character whose true place is in the heart of the whole Trilogy—Falstaff—who seems to many readers not to get his right treatment here at the close. Ought not the penitent Knight to be saved as well as the penitent Prince? There is no doubt that his would have been a far greater work if the poet had known how to redeem Falstaff along with Hal, despite their difference of age and rank. And it is equally certain that the Prince would have shown a far loftier character if he had taken his old devoted companion in sin with himself over into his new ethical life. There is something harsh if not inhuman in the way in which the converted Prince banishes from his presence his once nearest friend and fellow-worker in evil ways.

But is Falstaff redeemable? I think it is indicated where his chief psychological defect lies: in his Will. He often shows the contrite heart (*contritio cordis*) and often confesses plaintively his failings (*confessio oris*), but he could not fulfil that last stage of the penitential process in the corresponding deed (*satisfactio operis*). The least temptation or suggestion was to him an irresistible lure, and would spin him off into lying, thieving, sack-guzzling, after which would start another paroxysm of repentance. Still it is not to be forgotten that he amid all his excesses feels the backstroke of conscience, and then drops into one of his penitential effervescences, which, however, have no power of cleansing his life. So he is left to his fate by his comrade, the Prince, and also by his poet, Shakespeare, both of whom appear to deem him the doer of the irremissible sin.

Such we must hold to be the poet's present view of his erring fellow-man, which indicates the stage he has so far reached in his spirit's development—somewhat limited, not yet fully freed of the prescribed fetters of his age. It is true that Shakespeare cannot now redeem his transcendent reprobate, who therefore has to stay unregenerate and damned. But the time will come when the poet is to win the power of rescuing Falstaff, as he does a worse man, Leontes, and when finally he will save through repentance even Caliban, a Dantesque monster, half-human, half-bestial—seemingly the last dramatic deed of his life, set forth on the last page

of his last play. But that fulfilment lies far ahead of his present state of evolution, in a wholly new Period of his creative energy, which we have called his redemptive time. But this completed realisation of the poet comes long after the present drama, and can only take place when he has passed through the experience of his tragic Period, which is likewise yet to be.

We still go back and ask: In what lay Falstaff's charm for the young Prince? Somewhat parallel runs the question: In what lay Marlowe's charm for the young Shakespeare? Genius is common to both and a transcendent power of self-expression; but their deepest fascination lies elsewhere. Both Falstaff and Marlowe were members and indeed makers of that negative, perverted world, which is the night-side or the unsunned half of humanity; and that is just what Prince Henry and Shakespeare must know and experience in order to be and to realize the whole man in their own manhood. Call it the old Serpent's temptation, Adam's fall, or the soul's first love for Lilith, the enchantress or the Dark Lady; the poet and his prince are going to test in its full actuality the grand cosmical dualism of good and evil, master it, or perish.

In fact, Marlowe seems alluded to in an early passage of this Trilogy, which recalls the pivotal fact of his most characteristic play, his *Faustus*: "Jack, how agrees the devil and thee about thy soul that thou soldest to him on Good Friday last

for a cup of Madeira and a cold capon's leg?" (First Henry IV. Act 1. Sc. 2). So Falstaff too has bartered his soul to the Devil for appetite's sake in imitation of Faust's agreement with Mephistopheles—probably a wild scene from Marlowe's drama mimicked by Falstaff in the pothouse at Eastcheap blasphemously "on Good Friday last". And the Prince forecasts the outcome: "Sir John stands to his word, the Devil shall have his bargain", and take his own. No salvation for him according to the Prince and Marlowe, and also according to the present Shakespeare, who will voice Falstaff's final condemnation through the same Prince Henry when the latter gets to be king. Thus it would seem that Shakespeare's Falstaff has one or more lines of derivation from Marlowe's Faustus, which character itself springs of the supreme Teutonic Mythus of the bargain with the Devil.

Still the Prince with all his keen twitting had strong affection for Falstaff, whom he really demanded for his completed discipline. When he sighs: "I could have better spared a better man", he confesses not only his love but also his need of the Fat Knight whose society, or rather whose schooling, he was not yet quite ready to do without. (End of First Henry IV). What was the want, or perchance the gap which Falstaff filled in his life? Not merely amusement but training he received; Falstaff's school was for him that of the World Perverted, and also that of the Will Perverted;

he was getting through Falstaff's unique pedagogy to be aware of himself, of his fellow-man, and of his future vocation, as ruler. Sense of loss one may hear in his deep suspiration over his teacher's supposed death:

What, old acquaintance! could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life! Poor Jack, farewell!
Oh I should have a heavy miss of thee
If I were much in love with vanity!

So he looks back with pensive fondness, yet hints his spirit's change already setting in away from his "vanity". The words breathe forth so heartfelt and expressive that we may catch in them the voice of the poet himself giving a brief retrospect of his experience, as he flashes his look backward upon this present Epoch now about to close.

Falstaff is tragic, but not bloodily so; he is not slain by violence upon the stage, as was the case in the poet's early tempestuous dramas (*Titus, Richard III*). Exactly what to do with the Fat Knight at his career's close seems to have given some trouble to the poet, who could not kill him off as a villain or save him as a penitent. Broken by the King's harsh reproof and dismissal, Falstaff goes back to his early fellow-bibbers in Eastcheap where he will die without saying a word of blame. From these sympathetic friends we get some throbbing echoes of what has happened to him: "the King has killed his heart", says the Hostess once known under the name of Dame Quickly. And Pistol evi-

dently will convey the same meaning in his pompous Latinized jargon: "His heart is fractured and corroborate". Thus Falstaff is made to die of a broken heart, seemingly the only instance in Shakespeare, with the possible exception of Kent in *King Lear*. The question pushes up even in Eastcheap: Where is he now? The funeral sermon is preached over him by the lowly woman there, who says of Falstaff: "Nay, sure he is not in hell; he's in Arthurs's (Abraham's) bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom. He made a finer end and went away, an it had been any christom child". So speaks in her pathetic patois the forgiving Hostess, for she has had much to complain of in her various dealings with her long-trusted customer, who was so gifted with wit and abdomen and impecuniosity. Lines of heroism she shows which the heroic King himself has not, and she seems dimly prophetic of the coming final Shakespeare, when he will be able to redeem even a Falstaff, who undoubtedly requires a longer, profounder, more searching discipline than the poet can now give him, without some newer and deeper-reaching experience of his own.

In about ten years from the conclusion of this play, as we score the time, the poet will unfold into his final remedial Period, when he will show a pervading bias, or rather a settled passion for redeeming his own damned of his former dramas. Thus he will rise beyond his retributive self into the soul's mediatorial realm, of which we may feel the mood and catch the word in *Winter's Tale*. Then

he will have transcended his present heroic model, and outstripped his once idealized *alter ego*, Henry V, into a new stage of his Life-drama, having attained the love and the fulfilment to be a savior instead of a destroyer.

But before this concluding redemptive time, which will be his Third Period, and in towering contrast with the same, Shakespeare is to pass through the darkest, deepest, woofullest, yet mightiest upburst of his genius, which constitutes the Second Period of his Life-drama, that of his great tragedies. Such is the truly Olympian age of his creativity, into which *Henry V* opens a lead better than any other of his plays. For its all-hailed triumphant hero necessarily called up his son and successor, the weak, ill-fated, tragic Henry VI, to the mind of the poet who had already, ten or a dozen years before, written or helped to write the sad Trilogly of that will-less monarch's woes. Verily the latter's hapless lot was ever present and deeply seething in the soul of Shakespeare during the incubation and composition of his *Henry V*, being often suggested in the drama itself, and directly, even emphatically expressed in its last six lines:

Henry the Sixth in infant bands crowned king
Of France and England, did this king succeed;
Whose state so many had the managing
That they lost France and made his England
bleed;

Which oft our stage hath shown; and for their
 sake
 In your fair minds let this (play) acceptance
 take.

In this passage the poet as with a low under-breath hints of the awful nemesis of Agincourt turned back upon England—a great triumph for Henry V, but a greater calamity for his heir Henry VI; a sudden victory for a day, a lasting defeat for all time. Such was the maddened irony of History which Shakespeare could not help realizing mentally in its full intensity, as he crushed his overflowing soul through his penpoint into the manuscript of this drama of Henry V. We may hearken him pouring forth his very selfhood into the prayer of the King just before the fight of Agincourt, as the latter cries out in agonizing supplication “O God of battles”, he being wrung with the presentiment of coming retribution now due to his family on account of its blood-guilt toward Richard II:

Not to-day, O Lord—
 O not to-day, think not upon the fault
 My father made in compassing the crown!
 I Richard's body have interred new,
 And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
 Than issued from it forced drops of blood.

So that original deed of wrong has propagated itself along with the royal inheritance in the heir who now seeks to countervail its curse by penitential works:

Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay
 Who twice a-day their withered hands hold up
 Toward Heaven, to pardon blood—

blood spilled in that heinous crime against an anointed king, such as I am now. Still further runs the atonement :

And I have built
 Two chantries where sad and solemn priests
 Still sing for Richard's soul.

But that is not enough ; nay, it is quite impossible now to do adequate penance for the remission of such a Heaven-defying sin :

More will I do ;
 Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
 Since that my penitence comes after all,
 Imploring pardon.

Why this closing note of despair ? Evidently the King is not yet ready to make complete the full process of repentance, which lacks the final act of renunciation and restitution, that of surrendering all the gain of the evil deed (the *satisfactio operis*).

At this point we may well listen, for the sake of its added emphasis, to a similar thrill of anguish in the nearly cotemporaneous Hamlet drama, in which there appears another King (Claudius) who in prayer beseeches forgiveness without the full reparation for his guilty deed :

Forgive me my foul murder !—
 That cannot be, since I am still possessed

Of those effects for which I did the murder—
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
 May one be pardoned and retain the offence?—
 Tis not so above.—

Thus the two Kings, of England and of Denmark, confess their common failure in the work of atonement for their transgression.

Through his repetition of such despairful contrition sprung of misdoing, we have to question Shakespeare himself if he ever experienced these racking throes of conscience which he has so subtly yet so mightily expressed in his hero? Surely not for any blood-guilt, there is no evidence of that red dye against him; still his transgression he must have felt with all his deeply poetic sensitiveness and imagination, and have suffered paroxysms of remorse so that he would often cry out through the mask of his characters:

May one be pardoned and retain the offence?
 Try what repentance can; what can it not?
 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
 O limed soul—

So the blood-guilty Danish king agonizes when he summons before his own judgment-seat the final necessary act for completing his repentance, but left undone. Now the poet in more than one Sonnet voices himself to be in a similar condition, using directly the first person, as in Sonnet 120:

And for that sorrow which I then did feel
 Needs must I under my transgression bow,
 Unless my nerves were brass or hammered steel.
 For if you were by my unkindness shaken,
 As I by yours, you've passed a Hell of Time—

(not quite the same as our petty profanity, a *hell of a time*, since it suggests all Time turned to a Hell). Thus the poet gives us brief glimpses into his personal Inferno with its tortures of reminiscence.

Such is King Henry V just before Agincourt racked by conscience, yet revealing his loftiest and worthiest in the very pinch of his sorest trial. But after Agincourt what will be his behavior, when the overwhelming and unexpected victory has been won? It must be acknowledged that he deteriorates in success, he sinks to a far lower level of character in the very uplift of his triumph. He woos and weds Katherine the daughter of the French King, with a flippancy and downright mockery, not to speak of indelicacy, which causes the shocked reader to wince and wonder what such an abrupt descent from his spirit's grandeur can mean. In this respect the Fifth Act quite reverses and drags down the heavenly-thoughted Fourth Act to an equality with the ribaldry of Boar's Head. So we now hear the victorious young Monarch make unlovely love to his forthcoming royal spouse: "Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half

French half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard?" Thus we are reminded to see again Prince Hal obscenely joking with Falstaff at Eastcheap in the presence of Doll Tearsheet.

But what must the poet have recalled and felt piercing through his soul as he drew such a grotesque picture? He had already portrayed and had often seen acted "on our stage" the reign of that "boy half English half French", Henry VI, who, instead of being able to "take the Turk by the beard" in Constantinople, will be dethroned, imprisoned and done to death in London—the last act of the long Lancastrian tragedy. And this so lovelessly wooed and wedded Katherine, will be succeeded by Margaret, "the she-wolf of France", who is turned loose upon England whose people will be harried deathward through her ambition and cruelty, in a kind of secret retribution for what they have done to her country. She becomes the incarnate Nemesis of Agincourt for the conqueror, which victory is thus the grand English-historical tragedy in Shakespeare, who therewith personally seems to be passing over into his new tragic Period.

For this reason the student of Shakespearian biography will ponder anew these last two Acts of *King Henry V*, especially in their relation to the succeeding historic Trilogy of *King Henry VI*, to catch some glimpses into the deepest and darkest node of the poet's Life-drama. Thus we behold

him in one way returning upon himself, going backward and connecting with his earliest work; but in another and far profounder way we are to trace him moving forward into the new and supreme stage of his career. Still with him we must share the pang of it, for by the necessity of his spirit's development, his Happy Sexennium he has now to leave behind, and start to live his mightily tragic Period in the very creation of his mightiest Tragedies.

III.

Sonnets.

Let the observant reader here take note that we again pick up the Sonnets as a continuous strand of Shakespeare's life and of its expression. A part of them belong to the present Epoch; indeed a number of commentators throw all of them into these six years (1594-1600); yea, there are several expounders who would confine the entire series within some three years of this Sexennium—a great mistake to our thinking, but fortunately as yet not very contagious.

Accordingly, we shall here re-affirm that these Sonnets are primarily to be looked at as a poetic diary which reaches through many years of varying experiences, a score of them probably, and which definitely terminates in 1609, the date of their publication. Also they mirror the personal side of the poet—his multifarious stages of development both in his spirit and in his art, as well as

his lighter moods and caprices. At times they seem a mere external sport, or versified gimcrack, with mystification enough; but at their best they utter the deepest thoughts as well as the most passionate throbs of Shakespeare's soul. Above all, they reflect in their total sweep the inner psychical movement of the poet's Life-drama.

So it comes that we shall endeavor to show in the present Epoch the small private stream of Sonnets running along with or perchance underneath the full tide of the public Dramas, and forming the lyrical more internal counterpart to the more external dramatic element, which has been set forth in the foregoing account of Comedies and Histories, eleven plays all told. There is no intention here to select all the Sonnets which may be assigned to this Epoch, but simply to choose a few characteristic ones which will illustrate its leading phases.

I. The first point which has been repeatedly emphasized is that this is Shakespeare's reconciled, distinctively harmonious time, more than any other of his entire life. Hence we have entitled it his Happy Sexennium, during which he writes no tragedy, but gives to his plays a happy outcome on the whole, even if some characters, like Hotspur, fall by the wayside in the sweep of the action. Now this salient feature of the Epoch is decidedly marked in some of the Sonnets, which seem, therefore, to represent the poet's prevailing mood as well as his world-view at this time.

Of course the chief poetical theme as well as the all-embracing emotion of the poet is love, of which the unity, constancy, and deep contentment find expression in the following Sonnet (105) :

Let not my love be called idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such and ever so.
Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse, to constancy confined,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.

Such we may take as a sort of motto to the *Sexennium*, in which the poet's verse sets to music the oneness and the concordance of the world and of himself. In the second part of the same Sonnet, he gives his theme a new peculiar turn, which may be called Platonic, since it recalls a famous triplicity of the old Greek philosopher known in our later English as the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, which, however, are together attuned to the same underlying monochord of felicity :

Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,—
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope
affords.
Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,
Which three till now, never kept seat in one.

This curious item we may regard as Shakespeare's own philosophic summary, in abstract rhymed speech, of his writings during this Epoch, for it will hardly apply so well to any other time of his life. The foregoing "three themes in one" show now the conscious, reflective purpose of the poet, who thus suddenly turns philosopher in thought and nomenclature, affirming their "wondrous scope" in his works and their "varying to other words" in his various dramas, for instance. So we may in this subtly significant passage detect Shakespeare affirming that the True, Beautiful and Good "is all my argument", the content of all my poetry in my present stage of mind, which (we may here forecast) will soon change with a tremendous rebound the other way.

One other little bit with a somewhat different turn may be here set down, in which the poet protests his constancy and return after some absence (109):

O never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify.
As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie:
That is my home of love.—

Perhaps here we catch an early glimpse of the Dark Lady whose nameless nebulous shape fleets off and on through the whole line of these Sonnets, striking in him the full gamut of his emotional nature from love's bliss to its last damnation.

II. The second leading characteristic which has been stressed as strongly marking the present Epoch, is the poet's reaction from his former wild life and revolt against the established institutional order, which revolt he had not only lived but also represented in his earlier writings. Still now he has turned away from the influence of the anti-social Marlowe and from the wild comradeship of poetic world-stormers, and has become the defender of tradition and its institutions, confessing his previous lapse with a note of penitential sorrow, but also proclaiming his present recovery (Sonnet 110):

Alas! 'tis true, I have gone (ill) here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is
 most dear,
Made old offenses of affections new;
Most true it is that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely;—but by all above,
These blenches gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays proved thee my best of love.
Now all is done, (I) have what shall have no
 end.—

Many different interpretations have been given of these lines; but whatever may be their special meaning, they show one clear unmistakable purport: the poet's deep-toned regret over his former time of transgression, and his turn to a new stage of life, to "another youth" in heart and in crea-

tion. Moreover the word *motley* seems a hint of his dramatic work, which he confesses to have prostituted to gain, or to applause, and thus to "have gored his own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear". Still he has risen out of that time of eclipse, rejuvenated seemingly just through these "blenches", or aberrations of conduct. So he has won by experience a higher point of life's renewal, which we may identify as his Happy Sexennium, both in his soul and in his work.

It should be noted that the foregoing nine lines, penetrating, transparent, and profoundly interconnected, are followed by five lines of quite the opposite character, apparently to make up the full quatorzain. The same difficulty will often puzzle the reader, and perhaps drive him to think that the single Sonnet within its own little confine can at times show as much disorder and lack of inner continuity as the whole body of Sonnets. Especially does there seem to have been a lurking temptation to tag on to a bright jet of perspicuous and fluid verse an obscure and quite worthless padding, that the number of lines be stretched out to the regular quota of fourteen.

III. Love, under one form or other, must be deemed the dominant principle or energy of the present Epoch, being specially manifested and made real in its eight Comedies. "The marriage of true minds" in man and woman is the grand parturient comic theme, bringing forth the ultimate harmony, the most lasting reconciliation possible to

this separative human individuality of ours. It would seem to be the visible present appearance of our immortal portion to Shakespeare, who hymns: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds", being "an ever-fixed mark", and not "Time's fool".

There is no doubt that the completer incarnation of Love, according to our poet, is now found in the woman. Hence he has in this Epoch created that ever-marching line of female characters, at the head of whom rise Portia, followed by Rosalind, down to "sweet Anne Page". It is strange: in them we are made to feel that some of our closest and dearest acquaintances have never lived, that in Shakespeare's folk the undying soul has never had to pass out and over the bourne, that the re-incarnated spirit (by the actor) has never been incarnate. All through the World's Literature as well as through our own lives stalk those ghostly yet intimate associates of ours—Hamlet, Goethe's Faust, Homer's Helen and also Shakespeare's Helena. Thus there is an overworld of ideal denizens living with us breathers, whereof Shakespeare may be deemed the greatest creator.

In several Sonnets the poet has sought to express this Love as absolute, self-contained, truly the universal energy in his writ. We shall cite the weightiest one for the reader's oft repeatable contemplation (116):

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:
 O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wandering bark
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
 taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and
 cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

Very massive, lofty, and sunlike rolls the temper of these lines, which assert not only the constancy but the eternity of love in "true minds". Yet the slack snapper may be heard in the same Sonnet's last distich, which here seems to call up Shakespeare looking backward at his writings and affirming the above doctrine to be the principle of his composition:

If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ—

any love-plays, and furthermore I never experienced love for any human being. So we may construe this cloudy close whose nebulosity contrasts with the previous sunshine of the Sonnet.

IV. Along with this return and restoration from his error and estrangement, the poet in the Sonnets gives us repeated glimpses of his philosophy of life.

The spirit's power of self-recovery after the lapse he proclaims with emphasis (109) :

So that myself bring water for my stain.—
 Never believe, though in my nature reigned
 All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
 That it could so preposterously be stained.

The scheme of evil not only in the world but in the individual we find him probing to the bottom, and "creating every bad a perfect best". He proclaims "the benefit of ill", and visions beatifically "that better is by evil still made better", and even from the hardest blow to his heart's tenderest passion he sings his happy recovery (119) :

And ruined love, when it is built anew,
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far
 greater.
 So I return, rebuked, to my content,
 And gain by 'ill thrice more than I have spent.

Such is the desperate optimism which chants the lofty paean of the poet's triumph over the destroyer within and without.

Through the dramas of this Happy Sexennium runs a similar strain to that of the foregoing Sonnets. Especially the Lancastrian Trilogy dwells upon the soul's dip into evil and the method of its restoration. Already we have emphasized the character and career of Henry V who illustrates this deepest process of human experience—the descent into transgression and the way out. Also it has

been noted that in him the poet is recounting the great transition of his own soul-life, which gives the inner push of the present Epoch.

Perhaps the culmination and summary of this whole time of the poet's new evolution we may find in the words of Henry V at the grand crisis just before the battle of Agincourt. The king, as if at his confessional and in presence of Eternal Truth, puts his highest self-expression into the form of a prayer:

God Almighty!

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out;—
Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
And make a moral of the devil himself.

Hence old Satan can be, and has been transformed by the transformed man, and the bad itself becomes the grand means and incentive to the good:

For our bad neighbor makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful and good husbandry;
Besides they are our outward consciences,
And preachers to us all, admonishing
That we should dress us fairly for our end.

So he would make sin a good clergyman or preacher whose sermon turns on the ministry of transgression.

Thus it is that in this poetic diary of the Sonnets we hear at certain places an echo of the poet's Happy Sexennium, of his reconciled Epoch; whose key-note we may catch undertoning all his writings

during the present time. And we find the same general character in the external occurrences of his life. Even mistake, error, wrong, transgression—all the negative phases of existence—are made remedial toward a higher human worthiness, if not perfection.

Here a warning may be inserted. The dates of these Sonnets singly or in their groups have never been ascertained. Only one fixed time-limit for them as a whole is fully certified—the year 1609 when they were first printed. Still their great differences of mood, thought, style, literary value, are not only noticeable, but demand some kind of correlation with the poet's entire achievement. As already stated, they impress themselves vividly upon us as the writer's intimate self-communings, as his heart's confessions while passing through the various crises of his Life-drama.

V. And still a subtler, deeper mystery lurks in these Sonnets, which we shall here merely indicate with brief illustration. Through quite all the many years of these verses fleets a baffling shape which is often declared by the poet to be his secret inspiration, his "tenth Muse", evidently a woman who, after Shakespeare's own description, has been called The Dark Lady. In more than one Sonnet he has placed her at the heart of his creative energy, as in No. 38:

How can my Muse want subject to invent,
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my
verse

Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
O give thyself the thanks, if aught in me
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight;
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
Than those old nine which rhymers invoke;
And he that calls on thee let him bring forth
Eternal numbers that outlive long date.
If my slight Muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

May we not see in this fervent homage the real inspirer of Portia and Rosalind, the living woman "that pour'st into my verse thine own sweet argument"? And in the next Sonnet (39) we hear a like declaration: "thou art all the better part of me". Of course there has been much controversy over this "tenth Muse"; man or woman is he or she—or possibly neither the one nor the other? Most famous of all identifications is the one made by Thomas Tyler, who has at least labeled her with a lasting name, that of Mary Fitton, though the correctness of it is stoutly contested. But however named or nameless she be, the writer's state of mind is not ambiguous. And that is just what the best reader wants to hear about, feeling in it the poet as he touches salient points of his biography.

Already we have stressed Shakespeare's devotion to love in general without specially designating

any person as its object. Love is not "Time's fool" for "it alters not when it alteration finds", but "bears it out even to the edge of doom" (see preceding citation of Sonnet 116). This we may conceive as the poet's statement of his principle or of the law of his genius, Love universal, to which we can now add its particular side or Love individual as incarnate in this Dark Lady. For she is exalted to be the one original source whence spring all his diversified creations, for instance in Sonnet 53:

Describe Adonis and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you;
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:
Speak of the spring and foison of the year,
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear—
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

This sets up *you* as the creative ideal which utters itself through the poet in all beautiful and bountiful appearances of art and nature. But who is this *you*? That is the burning question of the Sonnets yesterday and still to-day, whereto all sorts of answers have been given. Ours is: *You* are the Dark Lady, deeply veiled in your pronominal disguise here as elsewhere, while I, the self-revealing poet, William Shakespeare, unmask myself to the inlight in every line.

Such is in general the mood of unclouded bliss expressing Shakespeare's happy love during this Happy Sexennium. But even in its sheen certain deep-shaded rifts are starting to make themselves felt and sung, wherein his radiant felicity begins to show streaks of the coming eclipse. A highly ecstasied example of this change from love's pure sun-up to its hurried obscuration is given in Sonnet No. 33:

Full many a glorious Morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy—
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide
Stealing unseen to West with this disgrace:
Even so my Sun one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendor on my brow;
But out! alack! He was but one hour mine
The region cloud hath masked Him for me now.

So Love's luminary begins to grow dim till it darkens to deepest tragedy, whose midnight act, however, lies beyond the present Epoch. As usual there has been a deadly difference of opinion over that little pronoun *he*—what, whom does it stand for—literal Sun, Love, some man (Pembroke, Southampton etc.), some woman (the Dark Lady, or still another)? But whatever be the answer, the psychological change from felicity to gloom is brought

out with telling strokes, and that is the main point with the poet, who lets himself glow forth to the full while the other is persistently kept masked under a cloud.

A further stage in this reciprocal tangle of heart-throes may be found in the next Sonnet (34) :

'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou
break,
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace:
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss,
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offense's cross.
Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love
sheds,
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

Still the poet now will accept "those tears" (hardly shed for him by a noble Lord like Southampton, easily by a repentantly weeping woman), and will make them "ransom all ill deeds". So reconciliation comes to the pair, as at the end of the comedy. But the crisis will arrive hereafter when the wound of infidelity cuts too deep for restoration, so that the poet will cause tragic blood to spill from the faithless woman's heart, at least on the stage.

Through such choosing from this diamond heap of tumbled sonnets—flawless and flawed—we put together a little anthology which seeks to mirror the varying turns of Shakespeare's Happy Sexen-

nium, thus paralleling his other larger public work with a small private undercurrent of confession taken from his poetic diary. It may be repeated that the first personal pronoun in these sonnets is Shakespeare undisguised, hence directly self-revealing, while the other pronouns wear masks quite impenetrable, and I believe so intended by the poet.

After such manner the three literary forms of this final Epoch of Shakespeare's Apprenticeship—Comedies, Histories, Sonnets—are to be co-ordinated and interrelated, whereby they may be seen to unite fundamentally in one ultimate characteristic,—man's reconciliation with himself and with his world, on the whole his glad and gladdening Epoch.

But just look! now falls into our poet's Life-drama, not without some fitfully flashing foretokens, the deepest, dreadfulest counterstroke of human existence—his gladless, fate-shent time of Tragedy.

Retrospect of the Period. But before we advance to this coming culmination of the poet's Genius, which forms a wholly new Period of his biography, let us take a look backward at what he has passed through since we began observing his London Pan-drama. For we are now at the close of that busy and varied discipline of the poet which we have called his Apprenticeship, he being still the apprentice to his vocation and not yet the master in his full supremacy. About a dozen years it has lasted, with a marvelous poetic productivity

of many kinds. Still it forms but one stage—the first—of Shakespeare's total achievement, and hence but one part of his biography.

In the first place the reader will recall that this Apprenticeship has had its own distinct inner movement, with its three main divisions, which we have called its Epochs, designating each of them after its salient characteristic as follows: Collaboration, Imitation, Origination. Moreover these three stages are seen to form together a single process, which interrelates all three into one round of the poet's spiritual evolution. It is at this point that the vigilant reader will glimpse Shakespeare's individual Life-drama rising into and partaking of the movement of Universal Biography.

In the second place, it is worth while to look back over what the man has now achieved, and to give some estimate of his place in World-Literature. Shakespeare has already made himself the greatest dramatist of England even during his Apprenticeship; indeed it may be affirmed that his preceding twenty-two dramas along with his other verse pedestal him as the supreme poet of the English-speaking folk wherever it be found. He outranks earlier Chaucer and later Milton, perhaps his two chief rivals for the first place in English Letters, with his present achievement. If we pass to different tongues and peoples, Greek Aeschylus might equal him now, and possibly Spanish Calderon, not to mention other lofty competitors from abroad. That is, Shakespeare has already won the first place

in English Literature but not yet in World-Literature.

Now this is the next step to which he pushes forward, for he is not yet the full peer of Homer, of Dante and (we would add) of Goethe. Behold him, then, rise and advance with new and mightier uplift, winning his sovereign place among the authors of the Race's Literary Bibles, as decreed him by the Tribunal of the Ages sitting in judgment over all human writ. Such is the grand transition which the poet is now to make in his experience and to express in his art, mounting up out of his First Period of ever-unfolding Apprenticeship to his Second Period of completed Mastery.

At this point, however, it may be mentioned that the present book has fulfilled its chief purpose, which is to set forth as fully as possible the outer rise and inner evolution of Shakespeare till his present culmination. For just this portion of the poet's biography seems, as we would unfold it, to have been hitherto in part misconceived and in part neglected. Two more Periods of his Life-drama are to follow, but they are to be treated much more briefly.

SECOND PERIOD.

The Master's Tragedies.

We have now come to the greatest achievement of the greatest Shakespeare, according to the consensus of the best judges during the three centuries since his passing. Still loftier often runs the decision: these nine Shakespearian tragedies of his Second Period, taken together as a whole, are to be crowned the sovereign writ of the World's Literature. Accordingly Shakespeare, now the supreme hero of the Word, seems to be rising to a place alongside or even above the supreme heroes of the Deed—Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon—in Universal History. At any rate he may well be deemed the master of the Anglo-Saxon Word, which to-day promises to make him master of the World's Word.

Here, however, we may foresay that it is not at present our purpose to try to adjudge the literary value of these Shakespearian tragedies, but rather to trace and to bring to the light their biographic purport, which lies more or less hidden under their extensive stage wardrobe. The circumstances of

his time as well as his spiritual impress are creatively inwrought into all his works, which we are to unravel, selecting therefrom his distinctive lineaments, and weaving them together into the fabric of his Life-drama.

Unto this purpose we must again, when we read him, lie in wait for Protean Shakespeare, so that we may catch him talking about himself in what he makes his characters say. A personal strain of the poet has often been detected in their make-up, as we have already indicated. We may well hear his own individual experience, when he rises into his furiously demonic vein, portraying jealousy in Othello, ingratitude in Lear, misanthropy in Timon, and hurling his mighty vocables as Zeus does the Olympian thunderbolts. His highest expression always is instinct with self-expression.

So it comes that Shakespeare when his truly genetic spell is on, verily obsesses his characters and makes them utter his deepest passion, his largest experience, his most intimate selfhood. Still we have to see under, or rather live with him under, that dramatic mask of his, which is the native garb of his very soul. Hence the great tragic personages of this Period, vividly individualized as they are, we have ultimately to vision as the poet's own self-incarnations. Thus he is to be conceived now writing his innermost autobiography. But first let us put together the main external facts of this time.

I. Nine dramas are to be placed in this Tragic Period—nine and no more, all of them Tragedies,

not a History not a Comedy among them, though both history and comedy have their undercurrents through them. The next fact about them is that these nine are to be grasped, interrelated, and finally organized as one great work—nine acts, so to speak, of one comprehensive world-tragedy, the mightiest ever yet conceived and wrought to utterance in human speech. This unity we shall try to fetch to the fore in our exposition, representing as it does the sovereign phase of Shakespeare's total Life-drama, as well as his highest creative deed.

Another fact to be emphasized is that this unique spell of the poet's creativity, his Tragic Period, extends from the year 1600-1 till 1609-10, as near as these two dates marking its beginning and end, can now be made out. Thus the nine Tragedies run through nine years, which gives an average of one a year for their composition, though of course no such regular annual quota is provable. And it is evident that some of these dramas required for their full elaboration a much longer time than others.

Observed also should be the point that the poet during this acme of his authorship was in his middle age, being about thirty-six years old when the Period opened, and forty-five when it closed. Thus he stood at his highest physically and mentally, and did his supreme work mid that very flowering of human existence, as our days ordinarily run, when the man's maturity is still intergrown and upborne with youth's fresh energy. So

his greatest Self became tragic. Such was the English poet's ominous prologue to the coming Seventeenth Century, which was destined to be England's most turbulent Century since her Wars of the Roses, with whose multitudinous Tragedies Shakespeare preluded his dramatic career. Thus in a way he now goes back to his earliest beginning, yet with a vast difference in worth and word.

The retrospective reader is here inclined to exclaim: What a brain-stunning change to an intense concentration out of a soul-scattering diversity of labors! In the previous First Period we found Shakespeare writing every sort of Drama, History, Comedy, and also Tragedy—likewise every sort of Poetry, Epic, Lyric, as well as Dramatic: thus we went straying and browsing about through his lavish abundance, and became at first confused amid the poet's somewhat distracting versatility. So the question rises: What is the psychical source of such a mighty condensation of the Shakespearian soul-world to the point of its hottest tragic ignition and volcanic eruption? For, that is what now takes place, with seeming suddenness, though in reality it has already given scattered prophetic gleams of its coming outbreak for several years. Such is, indeed, the poet's subtlest and darkest psychological problem, with which we have to wrestle during the present Period, and which will recur repeatedly for fresh illumination.

Another change, striking through its suddenness, may be here set down. It is the sharp turn from

joy to sorrow in the creations of the poet, and hence in his own soul. We have just witnessed his Happy Sexennium, six prolific years of work reconciled, loveful, essentially featured as Comedy. From this prevailing mood, on the whole so self-centered and contented, we mark him whirl and take a plunge into the last depths of Tragedy. Again darts up the dark enigma of Shakespeare's profoundest spiritual transition—his turn from a comic harmonious world-view to his deeply tragic night-side of human life. But to-day our whole earth-ball ought to appreciate this fleet change from sunshine to all-menacing obscurity better than ever before in its history.

II. Before going farther, it is well to give some account of these nine Tragedies, which now constitute our single theme, as they are related to our poet's biography. Their names follow one another in this order: (1) *Julius Caesar*, (2) *Hamlet*, (3) *Macbeth*, (4) *Timon of Athens*, (5) *King Lear*, (6) *Othello*, (7) *Antony and Cleopatra*, (8) *Coriolanus*, (9) *Troilus and Cressida*. Such is our consecutive tally of the all-overtopping nine, along with their first easy linear arrangement.

The next problem is to find out whether this simple line does not break up and form cognate groups of plays. Chronologically it is now agreed by the best critics that the first two, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, are quite cotemporaneous, and are kindred in thought, style, characters, and especially in their tragic thrust or prime impulsion. To these

we add *Macbeth* for like reasons. So we have constructed our first group of three Tragedies, whose final completion lies in the years between 1600-1 and 1603-4, thus embracing about three years. All of them have their own marked individual differences, but at the same time bear a strong family likeness to one another in several common traits. Now to our mind the most distinctive and decisive of these common traits is that each of the three has its start from a supernatural urge or impact; that is, the primal tragic thrust in each drama drives from an Overworld of spirit or spirits in some form. Thus they all may be said to have in general the same original forthright push into being. Hence we shall designate this First Group, or chronologically this First Epoch of three years, the otherworldly Group of Shakespeare's middle-aged Tragedies (very distinct from his earlier ones), naming them after their deepest germinal characteristic. So it comes that *Julius Caesar* with its overruling Spirit of Caesar, *Hamlet* with its pre-existent Ghost, and *Macbeth* with its prophetic Weird Sisters, constitute a unique class by themselves, since these supernatural instruments are not employed again by the poet in his present Tragic Period.

The next best defined Group, in chronology as well as in outer and inner character, is generally accepted to be the two Roman plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. To these we shall conjoin *Troilus and Cressida*, about which, however, there is no little question as to date, dramatic

species, and authorship. Thus we have a Group of three Tragedies belonging to antique Greco-Roman History, and sprung as to theme of the old classic Mediterranean civilisation. Such is their united far-off historic derivation which classifies them together according to their common original source. Hence we shall name this Group the old-worldly (or the past-worldly) Group of Shakespeare's nine supreme Tragedies, whose Epoch lies in the three years between 1606-7 and 1609. This last date (1609) we take as the conclusion of the entire Tragic Period, being the year in which the final drama (*Troilus and Cressida*) of the whole series was definitely printed and given to the public.

We have now accounted for and put into order six of the nine Tragedies under purview, arranging these six into two distinct Groups, the first and the third. There remain three dramas, *Timon*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*, which on the whole show themselves the most refractory to any pervading principle of classification. Still, on close inspection, we may find them to have something in common which will bind their separated natures together into unity, forming them into the second or middle Group (or Epoch) of the present Period. In the first place all three have no outer supernatural impact for starting the dramatic action, as has the First Group; on the contrary their primal tragic thrust comes from within the man, from his immediate self, as emotion, passion, thought. In the second place these same three dramas are not pro-

jected into a great historic Past of the world's civilisation, as is the Third Group above considered; rather do they stress the immediate present in their occurrences and characters, though their story or fable be located in the far aforesaid more or less dim. These three middle Tragedies, accordingly, can be classed into one Group, the second, which may be labeled the present-worldly Group, thus showing another phase of the same determining principle which underlies the other two Groups.

Such is, as we conceive it, the internal organic order of these nine Tragedies, being interrelated according to their essential factor, not tumbled together after some merely external mark. We may recapitulate these Groups and their designations in one brief survey as follows:

(1) The other-worldly Group, determined supernaturally.

(2) The present-worldly Group, determined by man's own nature.

(3) The past-worldly Group, determined historically.

Of course this order is to receive its final confirmation in the special treatment of the plays, which must here be deferred. Meantime let the all-testing reader keep in mind the above result for his further scrutiny.

III. Having thus given a general organic outline of the poet's achievement during this Middle Period, of his biography, we may next inquire about the external events of his practical life, which must

also have had an influence upon his literary work, and have helped furnish its content. On the whole the best way to get a structural survey over these nine years of his outer activities, is to divide them according to the localities where they take place: Stratford and London. Now several biographers have observed that Shakespeare during this Tragic Period seemed to hover between his country-home and his city-work; and it is most natural to suppose that he would spend his vacation in rural quiet, then during the busy season he would be found immersed in his theatrical duties. Accordingly we may here assume, for the matter has no rigid documentary proof, that the poet, being now a wealthy man, found it greatly to his comfort as well as of advantage to his literary labors, that he make his yearly retreat to the calm of Stratford after the strenuousness of London. And that was and still is the general custom of the English land-owning gentry, among whom Shakespeare was now enrolled.

We have already observed in the previous Epoch that he had become a well-conditioned successful man in his poetic work, in his stage-art, and in his finances. Seemingly as soon as he was fully able, he returned to Stratford, his ever-loved birth-town, and still the home of his mother and father, of his wife and children, of his relatives and friends. We may recall that in 1597, he purchased the prominent Stratford residence known under the name of New Place, as a kind of palatial center for

his family and people, whereupon he also obtained from the herald's office a title of gentility. In these acts we can see that he was taking up and embodying in himself the transmitted customs and institutions of his native land; he was realizing himself as a complete institutional man after the English model. Undoubtedly in such a bent one has to recognize an ingrained aristocratic element, which the world must accept in Shakespeare as personally temperamental and as also deeply national; indeed what would England herself be and her history without her aristocracy? Therefore Shakespeare at Stratford during this time was the conformist, the traditionalist, building up his inner life as well as his environment in harmony with his people's age-hallowed prescription. Very different had been his defiant youth in the company of Marlowe and his imprescriptible fellow-poets.

But behold, when he turns back to roaring London from his placid country-side—what a metamorphosis within and without! He seems to revert with new and mightier intensity to his Marlowese Titanism. For just look into those Tragedies which he is composing and putting on his stage; the deepest, bloodiest soul-riving conflicts of the strong man in and with his institutional world the poet dares here to give and to live—quite the reversal of that tranquil life at Stratford so concordant with the established social order. Verily it is another world or rather the other side of the same world; also another man is this Shakespeare now, or better,

the other side of the same man, whose deepest doubleness it is our present duty to fathom and to synthesize. Somehow thus for a start we may conceive the Stratford Shakespeare and the London Shakespeare.

First of all we would gladly catch some glimpse of his private dwelling-place, and even of his workshop in the city. Let the fact be put in its full contrast: from his lordly spacious-mansion of New Place with its aristocratic pretension he shrinks back or perchance slinks back for his abode into a little room of a very modest lodging-house. He becomes a tenant of the humble tradesman, Christopher Mountjoy, public hair-dresser and maker of wigs, needful especially for theatrical people. This most interesting and telling fact, for it reveals much about Shakespeare's way of living as well as of his private occupations, has been recently dug up from that cemetery of long buried lawsuits and other ancient troubles known as the Public Record Office of London. Almost as surprising is this other circumstance that the excavator was an American Professor from far-away Nebraska University, Charles William Wallace, who reports examining several millions of old manuscripts, entombed there for some three hundred years, from which mountains of moldy written chaff he has sifted out these fresh golden grains of knowledge for the new Shakespearian biography.

This house of Mountjoy's stood "at the corner of Silver Street and Mugwell or Muggle Street in

Cripplegate ward"—Rabelais himself could not surpass this assortment of grotesque but genuine names. Moreover we are told that it was "an ancient and most respectable neighborhood", where dwelt many of Shakespeare's fellow-players and playwrights, mostly moneyless as usual, and evidently lodging like him in hired rooms, which are generally tenanted by the floating population of a great city. Thus did the wide-branching landed Stratford aristocrat shrivel and minimize himself into plebeian rookery quarters when he touched London. But why? Evidently he, disesteemed as an actor and probably also decried as an upstart, could not obtain social recognition in the capital from the nation's high-born class of titled nobility. Then a more compelling reason would be, that he needed quiet, solitude, self-communion in order to express himself fully in the great works which he was meditating and writing at this Period.

Moreover during his stay with the Mountjoys, which must have been prolonged, it is of dated record that in 1609 William Shakespeare played a peculiar quite dramatic role in a real love-affair which involved the wig-maker's family. He was solicited by Madam Mountjoy to act as a go-between or marriage-broker for the purpose of bringing into wedlock the household's daughter and a promising apprentice in her father's shop. The chief lure for the match seems to have been the young lady's dower of fifty pounds. This very real part our Shakespeare performed with complete

success, evidently making happy both the lovers and the parents. But the course of true love never did run smooth in actual life or in a Shakespearian comedy. After a time trouble arose over the dower, the husband complaining that he had the girl but not the stipulated money. The result was a lawsuit in the year 1612, whose proceedings are still preserved in the Court's record, which gives the evidence of Shakespeare as witness in the case thus suddenly resurrected by Professor Wallace from long dead oblivion to new shining immortality. But has not the circumstance a right comic tinge? Here the poet is discovered acting in life a part which recalls some of his dramatic characters, for instance Dame Quickly and Pandar; and he seems to have been chief maker of a real comedy whose personages were the members of the family with which he was a lodger. Well may he and we with him exclaim: All the world's a stage.

Another co-incidence must be brought to mind: during this same time, Shakespeare was at the height of his Tragic Period whose central year may well be dated 1604-5, as it lies just in the middle between 1600 and 1609, the extreme years of this Period. One remembers that the Second Quarto of *Hamlet* was printed in 1604, probably with Shakespeare's own consent, or even with his personal revision. Then it has long been observed that three of the poet's greatest Tragedies have a tendency to hover about this same date (1604-5), namely—*Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*—as far

as the chronological proof of their origin can at present be made out. Shakespeare was then forty years old, at the middle-aged acme of his mightiest creative energy, which he nursed to its supreme expression when working alone perchance in his modest room over the wig-shop.

The length of the poet's stay with the Mountjoys cannot be directly obtained from the documents, but it is inferred from his written testimony that his acquaintance with the family may have reached back to 1598. At any rate it is fairly presumable that he roomed in their house during the entire nine years of his Tragic Period, and completed on that humble spot all his great Tragedies, just the sovereign literature of all the world, as many good judges are saying at present. Fitting place it would seem to be for the worthiest memorial to the poet's heroic world-deed, these nine Tragedies, done in a little room of wig-maker Mountjoy's house in Cripplegate ward, at the corner of Silver Street and Mugwell or Muggle Street, London, as the legend runs—the locality being only "a five minutes' walk from St. Paul's Cathedral", still the city's monumental cynosure.

And let not the circumstance be forgotten, for it seems to be symbolic if not prophetic, that the most democratic fact in the life of William Shakespeare aristocrat, as he is often pronounced and denounced to-day, was dug up right in the heart of London, by a Professor from democratic America's most democratic Far West, who by some unique in-

stinct traveled over thousands of miles to the very habitat where the supreme Anglo-Saxon poet lived his humblest yet his greatest days. Verily, why just the American, the far-comer, and not an Englishman born on or near the spot? (See Londoner Sir Sidney Lee's sardonic scowl of depreciation (*Life of Shakespeare*, new ed. p. 27), and watch him tuck away into a brief foot-note every important discovery of Wallace. Still he is fair enough to tell where the full record may be found.)

But the most revealing circumstance in the environment of this Second Period is the poet's double domicile, dualizing him both as to his outer life and his inner soul into what may be called the Stratford gentleman and the London poet, or the reconciled (comic) Shakespeare and the world-defiant (tragic) Shakespeare. He after the intense strain of composing and staging his Tragedy had to flee from it to his peaceful rural home; but with time's recuperation and domestic solace, he would feel the renewed urge, seemingly irresistible, to return to the city where he again could give vent to the deepest present need of his spirit, namely his tragic self-expression.

IV. This fact necessarily calls up the dark secret of Shakespeare's long and intense tragic crisis which we always come upon when we look more searchingly into the present Period. Whence came and what means this awful downpour of suffering for nine years—one Tragedy experienced and expressed after another, blow upon blow, till the time

of his trial, or perchance expiation, was over? The result, however, is before us: the Tragedy of Tragedies set down in writ, one vast human Tragedy, that of Man himself, truly the tragic side or phase of Humanity, which the poet himself has passed through and told us of, in a kind of vicarious service for us as well as of final release and recovery for himself. We may here hint in advance that the poet survives his own tragic ordeal, and then enters upon a new and higher stage of his spirit's evolution—the coming Third Period of his Life-drama.

Shakespeare had already attained worldly success, he had won money, fame, influence, even rank—the externals of fortune were his by 1600. Thus his economic, utilitarian, purely personal motives for drama-making were fairly satisfied. He collected rents from his real estate; he had a good income from his profession, being dramatic author, actor, manager and shareholder in his theatrical enterprises; he must also have gotten some returns from his literary property, since his early poems, especially *Venus and Adonis*, continued to sell edition after edition. Recent estimates sum up Shakespeare's income at this time to have been a thousand pounds a year, which would be equivalent to some twenty or possibly twenty-five thousand dollars of our present American money, if we take into account the diminished purchasing power of our metallic standard, since gold now buys hardly a fourth or a fifth of what it did in Shakespeare's day.

Moreover the poet might have gone on producing his lighter plays, such as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, indefinitely unless something had stopped him. Such happy-ending and happy-making dramas were very popular and very remunerative, quite satisfactory as far as cash-box and reputation might be the poet's objects. But evidently a deeper necessity has taken hold of him, a mightier motive than any external reward has clutched his creative power and insists upon compelling it to utterance. Though he already be famed as the surpassing and most versatile poet of his time, having written some twenty-two dramas besides other kinds of poetry, he has not yet opened into the expression of his larger and deeper self; indeed he has just reached down to this in his evolution, and feels the irresistible urge to hoist it out of its dark formless depths into the formful light-bearing word.

And now we shall try to fathom some of the causes, if not the one ultimate all-coercive cause, which gave this tragic turn to the poet's Life-drama. On the whole it seems best to group these diversely compelling forces, working upon and in the man, under three heads which start from the first and outermost and then penetrate to the innermost and ultimate.

(1) What may be called Shakespeare's outer surrounding world, especially in its political aspect, was turning gloomy and threatening. All England looked forward with no small anxiety to the coming succession of the crown, as Elizabeth's demise ap-

proached. James of Scotland, son of its truly tragic Queen, the executed Mary, was the rightful heir, but his character inspired deep solicitude and even opposition. Was there brewing another long dynastic strife like the Wars of the Roses, those wars which young Shakespeare had helped put into bloody dramas, which were still demanded by people as mirroring their possible coming conflict? Evidently the poet, now of middle life, must have tingled with the present new significance given to his earliest work. Then the Queen, Elizabeth, being very old, morbid, lonely, getting more and more arbitrary like aged Lear, and even more cruel through an ever-growing suspicion of those nearest to her, became a sort of tragic Nemesis enacted before the whole land.

Against the Queen and her domination, some of the noblest spirits of the realm had not only protested but were ready to resort to arms. Then came the rebellion in which Essex being taken prisoner, was beheaded, and Southampton, the poet's special admirer and patron, was thrown into the Tower, with death hanging over his head till King James set him free. How deeply must sympathetic Shakespeare have felt at that long spectacle of his noble friend's ever-menacing tragedy! It was enough to tinge his soul with a like fate. Already we have noted that the poet, as he wrote the Lancastrian Trilogy, must have observed the germ of the growing insurrection in his high-born friends, and have signaled them a dramatic

warning from his play of Henry V, who executes remorselessly three aristocratic rebels. And even the career and end of Hotspur may have contained an admonition for the dashing defiant high-born Southampton.

It is probable, though not certain, that Shakespeare's theatre and even himself as actor became entangled in this rebellion by playing the deposition of Richard II in the streets of London during 1600-1 at the request of Essex and his supporters, in order to stir up the people to revolt against the Queen. She is reported to have brooded with a deep suspicion and horror over the play as intimating and perchance foreshowing her dethronement and death. In her excitement, doubtless, she once exclaimed that it had been acted forty times in open streets and houses for the Essex uprising, which, however, soon collapsed, being without any popular support. And Shakespeare's play of *Richard II* still shows the wound of this troubled time, since the early Quartos of it were slashed vengefully, being amputated of one hundred and sixty-four lines by the censor, who cut out the scene of the Monarch's deposition and submission.

Moreover, it would seem that the Globe Theater new-built about this time (1599-1600) and the scene of Shakespeare's chief London investment, as well as of his special vocation and of his supreme poetic self-expression, was threatened for years with injury if not with destruction through hostile litigation. This Theatre started out with a stormy

violent birth which, we may think, fated it from the start. Professor Wallace is of the opinion that these ever recurring business difficulties and hateful lawsuits have left their dark tinct upon Shakespeare's Tragedies of this Period, causing "the changed tone of the dramatic products" of the poet, who now as the Globe's Theatre's own voice "recorded the common tragic sense" lurking in all its actors and owners. The Professor also notes the great change in the mood of Shakespeare: "prior to the Globe enterprise his plays had been on the sunnier side" which seemed to close with *Henry V.* (Wallace, Nebraska University Studies Vol. 13, p. 32-3). So the poet's own new theatrical edifice embosomed within itself a kind of tragic destiny, being a fated if not haunted house, whose very walls seem to have had for him a tragic inspiration.

So we conceive that to Shakespeare there must have been a change from the London of the previous Period, which on the whole was comic and reconciled in the mirror of his plays, especially those written during his Happy Sexennium. But now London itself becomes about 1600 transformed for him and also in itself, as it unrolls for a time the threatening scene of a great tragic catastrophe both national and personal. It is probable that from this fatefully overshadowed city he would flee annually to his sunny country-home at Stratford for relief and restoration. Still when he had caught fresh breath and creative urge in his sylvan retreat, he would again feel himself drawn back to

London for a new outpour of the ever-fecundating tragedy which yet lurked in his life and in his environment, and demanded another corresponding utterance.

(2) Such was the present doom-menacing outlook immediately before Shakespeare's eyes; but he was also led or driven back to a past fated world, that of Greco-Roman antiquity, which had left a noble account of itself in various forms. Now the form of that old Mediterranean record which appealed most deeply and creatively to the poet during this Period he found in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* of the famous Greeks and Romans, as set forth in North's English translation of Amyot's French translation from the original tongue. It is not too much to say that Plutarch became for Shakespeare in his present tragic mood the *Book of Books*, which he pored over and assimilated during the whole nine years. One may conceive it to have been almost his soul's own breviary which he daily perused and pondered, and from which he won not only cultural knowledge but also a mighty productive impulse driving him to recreate a number of its tragic heroes in his own dramatic form and speech. So let us imagine Shakespeare reading, contemplating, and re-writing Plutarch in his little quiet den at the Mountjoy home, where he also kept his working library.

The poet had already composed his *English Historical plays*, the materials for which he in large part derived from Holinshed, toward whom his at-

titude was chiefly that of an appropriator of events of history with their personages. But his relation to Plutarch grew to be very different, far more intimate; from the old Greek biographer he took not only the needed incidents, people, and words, but the spirit, the world-view, which he makes his own for the time being. It is probable that Shakespeare had already dipped into Plutarch back in his youthful comic Epoch, since he shows some Plutarchian traces in his *Midsummer Night's Dream* and elsewhere. Still the modern poet was not ready for the ancient biographer till now, when their two souls came together and interfused in a kind of mutual enthrallment and ecstasy. Both dwelt in a world of tragic heroes, whose destinies they portrayed each after his own art-form. Shakespeare was in a Plutarchian mood, and Plutarch, we may add, was in Shakespearian mood. So they found each other, both being at their deepest turn tragically minded.

Of the nine Tragedies three are taken directly from Plutarch, all belonging to Roman History, whose grand personalities fascinated, and for a time fated Shakespeare. In three others Plutarch's influence and also his materials can be traced. We have already noted how deeply Shakespeare was in former years determined by the Italian Renaissance, which sprang from the antique Greco-Roman culture, and which he after his manner assimilated and reproduced in his numerous comic plays. But the Shakespeare now Romanizing in Tragedies

shows a much profounder and more original and compelling genius than the Shakespeare once Italianizing in Comedies. And the more narrow Shakespeare of the English Histories rises from his particular nation to the universal Shakespeare of the World's History. Such is one line of his larger evolution into and through his present tragic Period.

We are to recall that Plutarch lived in a time of decadence and looked back upon two tragic worlds, the Greek and the Roman, with their respective Great Men whom he compared and paralleled, being mooded to pensive reminiscence as if such greatness had forever passed away. Hence Plutarch, sculpturing his long gallery of classic biographies toward the close of the first century A. D., shows the pervasive belief, like his great contemporary the historian Tacitus, that the Roman Empire, then embracing the civilized world, was in a state of decline deathward. Such was also Shakespeare's mood at this crisis—a mood which our own recent World-War brought home to many of us helplessly sympathetic with all its tragic intensity.

Thus our poet for his more universal self-expression turned back to a corresponding time with his own—so he felt—to the great past of the World's History. And he lived in that antique writ, which was most congenial with his spirit's condition, being the work of Plutarch who from this outlook may be deemed a Greco-Roman Shakespeare pro-

jecting his double line of heroic characters, who are wrestling desperately with their tragic destiny. Still, here let it be whispered ahead, that underneath this deep Plutarchian vein we catch glimpses of a deeper strain of Shakespeare unfated and reconciled, which will yet rise to the surface and utter itself in a new dramatic form

(3) But far profounder, more desperate and soul-compelling than the two fore-mentioned causes for Shakespeare's present tragic turn, was the third cause, which must now be set down with due emphasis. There fell upon him about this time the subtlest, intensest, most heart-cleaving experience of all his days, which tapped the last sources of his being and made them well up into his mightiest volcanic utterance. For there sweeps now through his life's scene the shadowy figure of a woman limned by himself in overcast but very suggestive outline as *The Dark Lady*. It was she who, irresistibly fascinating but utterly faithless, had the demonic power of upturning and perverting the very ground-work of his existence. Thus he has a furious love-life, at least when he stays in London, which, though attuned with the most exquisite pain, rouses to its highest excellence his supreme creative gift, and reveals what may well be called the deepest and most eternal experience of his entire career.

At the heart of Shakespeare's productive personality lay love ever active, with its double power as the original fountain of all his best and of all

his worst, of his maddest execrations as well as of his wildest ecstasies. Through Antony's mask we may hear the poet's rapture:

Now for the love of Love and her soft hours!
There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure now.

Not only as lover but as the lover of Love does he touch his topmost bliss. On the other hand falls the harsh counterstroke in his confession: "Love is my sin", though it had been not only his joy, but his grand means of reconciliation in the preceding Epoch, his Happy Sexennium. Harken now to his desperate estate (Sonnet 147):

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease:
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
Th' uncertain-sickly appetite to please.

He even proclaims his own mortal undoing: "Desire is death", so consumingly tragic blazes up his passion. Then his despairful outlook:

Past cure I am, now reason is past care—
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are
At random from the truth vainly expressed.
For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee
bright,
Who are as black as hell, and dark as night.

Such is his darkest picture of his Dark Lady, who keeps lulling him with her vampire love while sap-

ping his very sanity and crazing his speech to that of a madman.

Very significant seems to us the poet's confession here that his love-fever brings upon him wild paroxysms of madness, which vents itself in irrational discourse. One has to think of Shakespeare's line of mad or mad-seeming folks who range through a number of his Tragedies, beginning with Hamlet and Ophelia and culminating in Lear, with crazy streaks in Timon, Lady Macbeth, and perchance in others. But the main point now is to note that only in the poet's Tragedies of the present Period does he show such a strong unique bent toward the portraiture of the internally broken mind. Hitherto in the First Period with its genial diversity of Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, there is not a distinctive madman, though he has clowns and fools even to superfluity. But the deeper turn of his pen to an incurred spiritual disorder now rises to the front for the first time in his Life-drama. In fact a kind of predilection, or at least some mighty need of his own soul's deliverance drives him to anatomize and to dramatize the deranged Psyche of man and woman. Why such a seeming idiosyncrasy of creation in our greatest poet? Again we record our belief that the necessity lay co-ercively within his own heart's experience to invoke his shattered spirit's ultimate remedy, namely self-expression in his art. Such was his way to "cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart", projecting

his deepest psychic alienation out of himself into writ and thus getting rid of it, at least for a respite. If we dare take him on his word, he knew how to save himself from insanity through the healing power of his own literary utterance. So we may prophesy that he will at the grand goal overcome this most insidious yet enraptured of life's illusions—the sensuous lure of the Dark Lady, more commonly painted as the Scarlet Woman.

Here, then, would seem to be the central, genetic source of Shakespeare's deepest-fermenting change from his previous happy reconciled nature to his present tragic all-dooming temper. One thinks that he often alludes to this change of himself in what may be taken as the opening play of this Tragic Period—Hamlet. The Queen-mother wonders at "our too-much changed son", and the King asks anxiously: "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" And Hamlet directly declares: "I have that within which passeth show", that which cannot be given in any outward seeming like an acted part or a drama. Moreover, he throughout the play appears to be tampering with the problems of insanity, having become much interested in it and testing it with varied experiments on himself. So the whole Court is set agog by the odd unwonted doings of the young Prince.

Moreover Hamlet himself in the most exalted prose passage of the drama describes his change, outer and inner, from his previous Happy Sexennium: "I have of late—but wherefore I know

not—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises”, a very personal touch which hints him brooding gloomily in his room. “Indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promonitory. . . . What a piece of work is man! . . . And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither”—which latter note indicates his deepest difference from his former time of felicity. The love of woman, once the fountain of his sweetest creation, has turned to the bitterest curse. Almost at the start of the play we hear him exclaim this curse to himself: “Frailty, thy name is woman!” And then soon after he, the misanthrope, literally crushes the heart and also the brain of his lady-love, Ophelia, with his sledge-hammer words: “Get thee to a nunnery; why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?” The race deserves suicide, and he does not except himself: “it were better my mother had not borne me.” With this sentence we catch a glimpse into the last depths of the poet’s tragic wretchedness: he appears estranged not only from himself as individual and from his institutional world, but also from Man as born of Woman, from the Genus Homo itself whose reproduction should be halted at once on the planet. To such an all-devouring monster has ruined love overmade him from his once joyous productive energy, in which we beheld him not very long since luxuriating with so much productive ecstasy during his Happy Sex-

ennium. Here we touch the first cause, the original germ of the poet's most intimate psychical transformation: he, the mightiest lover of Love as the very home of his creative heart, has fallen out with Love itself, converting it into the World's tragic Pandemonium.

V. This brings us to emphasize the most striking, indeed the altogether stunning change in these nine dramas: it is Shakespeare's totally altered view of the female personality and its function in the universal order, when compared to what he has exalted it to be in his previous plays. Just put side by side the two opposite sets of women: first take Portia, Rosalind, Helena, and their like of the Comedies; then Goneril, Lady Macbeth, Cressida and their like of the Tragedies. What an awful abysmal contrast! Verily the Shakespearian woman has changed from the loving begetter and rescuer of love, to its subtle or ferocious destroyer; she now seems ready to tear to pieces her institution, the Family, showing herself totally unable and unwilling to heal its conflicts, which remedial power was her special gift, as once glorified by the poet. Often she turns to the insidious Fury undoing her very essence as mother, wife, sweetheart; or even when innocent, like Desdemona, she is shown the unconscious instrument of her own tragic fate, which also entangles others with her death.

This altered attitude of the poet in his treatment of woman is the supreme surprise which staggers the reader of these Tragedies when he takes them

up in their biographic succession. He necessarily interrogates their oracle: What desperate life-venomous experience underlies such a complete spiritual reversal of the poet's whole nature? It is not simply a stoppage, or a renunciation; Shakespeare is still the intense lover, yea the lover of woman's love, but this love of hers is for him and for his genius no longer positive and constructive, but negative and destructive. Still he clings to it, and mightily wrestles with it, and portrays it as the inner dominant energy of this Second Period of his writ and of his life's evolution.

Thus the Shakespearian woman, losing that love-born, reconciling, mediatorial power of hers becomes tragic, carrying along with her into her hapless lot the man, whom she not only fails to inspire and redeem, but lures and taints with her own spirit's poison. Again we have to think of the Dark Lady in this connection thralling to her Satanic fascination the love-shent poet, who well recognizes the deadly charm, but cannot shake it off. In more than one Sonnet we may hear him rattle his chains madly but in vain; take for instance No. 150:

Oh from what power hast thou this powerful
 might,
With insufficiency my heart to sway?
To make me give the lie to my true sight,
And swear that brightness does not grace the
 day?

Whence hast thou this becoming of all things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds
There is such strength and warrantise of skill
That in my mind thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?

With such piercing interrogations he seeks to penetrate this new mystery of his love-life, which is pulverizing his very soul in the crash of its contradictory emotions.

It should be remembered that Shakespeare had up to his present period seen three great historic Queens as dominant figures in the near nations of Western Europe. The sovereignty of woman he had witnessed in fuller reality than it has ever been manifested before or since. How Elizabeth affected him at this time has been already indicated. Catherine de Medicis (died in 1589) had shown herself a kind of Fury in the contemporary religious wars of France, having taken her part in the massacre of St. Bartholomew which occurred during the boyhood of the poet. Then the career of passion-fated Mary, Queen of Scots, with its tragic end in 1587 must have impressed his imagination profoundly, as it has stimulated poetic natures to its dramatic re-creation till to-day. All these cotemporary strong-willed Queens, three of them, had in them a demonic strain of feminine charm which must have gripped Shakespeare the more intensely through his personal experience with a similar woman, who

also tyrannized wantonly over his helpless love, as he has repeatedly bewailed in his Sonnets.

Woman, then, sovereign woman, is the man-scourging lost soul in these Tragedies. She becomes the original temptress who lures her Adam to his new transgression, which again means expulsion of both from happy innocent Paradise. Still it is but right to let the reader peep through the rifted storm-clouds toward the goal of this tragic Inferno, which opens doubtfully with Hamlet's mother Gertrude of Denmark, yet gives us fresh hope at its close in Volumnia of Rome, mother of Coriolanus. And more significantly Shakespeare starts his tragic despair by sending Ophelia to a nunnery, but after some eight or ten years he takes the nun out of cloistered life and graces her for marriage in the person of Isabella.

VI. The First Folio lists these nine plays under the head of Tragedies, which arrangement, as we conceive, derives from Shakespeare himself. Still three important changes have been found necessary. *Titus Andronicus* and also *Romeo and Juliet* stand in the Folio's list, but from the biographic viewpoint these two dramas are to be set down as youthful efforts and hence should be placed early in his First Period. *Cymbeline* is ranged among the Tragedies by the Folio; but the play, in spite of certain tragic elements, is essentially a drama of redemptive mediation, and so should be assigned to the Third Period. *Troilus and Cressida* causes the hardest puzzle as to its position. The Folio omits

it altogether from the Table of Contents, or the prefixed "Catalogue" of plays, but prints it among the Tragedies and designates it specially as a Tragedy.

So we keep bringing up and holding before us the mighty Nine of Shakespeare and of all Literature. We have to think that the dramatist, while writing them, was as tragic as any of his characters, or as the whole of them together. Not only Hamlet but Shakespeare himself was meditating suicide when he wrote the famous soliloquy, which indeed is the culmination of a preceding line of man-destroying thoughts like "Get thee to a nunnery"! There is a sonnet (No. 66) which seems inserted in his poetical diary as the personal counterpart of Hamlet's "to be or not to be", though the heartache of it is even stronger and fuller than that of the pensive soliloquy:

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry—
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily foresworn,
And gilded honor shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly doctor-like controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill.—

Eleven reasons he here sums up for quitting this tragic earth-ball, and yet he stays for one all-overpowering reason—love—which he cannot “leave alone” behind him, as it were deserted :

Tired with all these, from these I would
be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

Seemingly Shakespeare had felt, at least in his present mood, these “whips and scorns of time” as specially directed at himself. Did he not in his own case “behold desert a beggar born”, and likewise his “art made tongue-tied by authority” in the recent royal interference with his Richard II, “and folly doctor-like controlling skill” through the censorship? And so we may well hear in Hamlet’s soliloquy a parallel and perhaps cotemporaneous lament glooming over

The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes.

And let the keen-sighted reader fail not to remark that such complaints scarcely befit a prince of the blood like Hamlet, whose station would not naturally bring him into rasping contact with “the insolence of office” and such like troubles. Now Shakespeare the actor must in his vocation have endured all these ills of authority, but hardly the king’s son Hamlet. Thus the sonnet and the drama

strike the one fundamental key-note thrilled out of the life-experience of the poet.

From these instances along with many others, we are to win the ultimate conclusion: Shakespeare at his best uses his dramatic mask for his own deepest self-expression. If we are in right tune with his heart-strings, we may overhear him pre-luding something of the kind in one of his sonnets (No. 74):

My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay;
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee;
The earth can have but earth, which is his due—
My spirit is thine, the better part of me;
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead—.

Whoever or whatever this deeply shaded *thou* may be—the point is much disputed and can be turned to several meanings—one thing is here clearly emphasized: “this line” of mine is my memorial, consecrate, eternal, revealing “my spirit, the better part of me”, namely my immortal portion, beyond the death-dealing blow of Tragedy. So through his “line” he liberates himself from fate, even when his body has become “the prey of worms”.

Thus Shakespeare, we may repeat, has found the open secret of his life's supreme freedom through self-expression, through the grand discipline of writing his Tragedies, which writ affords

him not only the day's immediate relief but the spirit's final reconciliation and redemption. He has discovered that through his pen-point runs an ultimate inner self-evolution, and hence he has to write in order to unfold out of his present deeply negative condition. So this pan-tragic world of his, builded of his Nine Tragedies, which he has to pass through and to transcend in rocking throes of passion, is a kind of purgatorial discipline, being at bottom remedial for his lacerated, indeed demonized soul. His act of self-liberation is his writing, his weapon against his world-gloom and perchance suicide is his pen, which thus in his hands is not only mightier than the sword, but than death.

THIRD PERIOD.

The Tragi-Comedies—Expiation.

Into a new dramatic form as well as into a new stage of his self-expression Shakespeare now advances, having passed out of his death-dealing time, and triumphed over the Titanic negativity of his Tragedies. It is a basic turn in his life's total psychology, and constitutes the third grand act of his completed Pan-drama, as it has been played outwardly and inwardly through his whole career. Hence we caption it his Third Period, in line with his two preceding Periods which it rounds out to a finished achievement. Here may be again repeated that if the student aims to grasp the entire Shakespeare, he is definitely to outline and spiritually to appropriate these the poet's psychical Periods. For they are the ordered means of visioning the full sweep of his realized personality, and thus of becoming acquainted with the whole man both in his external and internal fulfilment.

Moreover, with some protest at the word, we have named this Period tragi-comic, inasmuch as it still has the note and the conflict of Tragedy, but of

Tragedy overcome, reconciled, indeed expiated. That is, the poet is no longer in his drama man-destroying, but man-rescuing; his new bent is to save even the tragic individual from fate, not to whelm him into its jaws. Hence we employ the blended vocable Tragi-comedy, very serious of meaning, even if usage has tainted it with a certain grotesque tinge.

I. Under this rubric we set down four dramas of Shakespeare, which, as their separate dates are not ascertainable, may be arranged in the following line of succession: *Measure for Measure*, *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Tempest*. All these plays have a similar ground-tone of religiosity, if not of formal religion; they show a common structural principle of flight and return; they are quite homogeneous linguistically and metrically; their pervasive spirit is mediatorial, that of atonement and restoration after lapse, wrong, sin.

Thus the whole may be said to form a Tetralogy of Redemption, a kind of Passion Play of Suffering and Salvation, which saves the otherwise doomed, which unfates the hitherto fated, which in its very course and process makes Tragedy untragic. And here should be noted the counterstroke: in undoing this elemental tragic obsession of his, the poet himself at his mightiest poetic overflow is undone; he becomes becalmed in his genius, being toned down into moderation, repentance, reconciliation. The gigantic Shakespeare of the Second Period seems now hamstrung, no longer world-overwhelming in

his grandiose energy, but repressive of himself and penitential of his own greatness.

So he now confines himself to four dramas which make this Period altogether the least copiously creative of his three Periods. Still he probably felt even with such a small output, that he had sufficiently expressed himself in this phase of his dramatic soul-life. He was young enough to have written much more, but he preferred to stop, having rounded the last arc of his creative cycle. Some three or possibly four years from 1609 till 1612, he was employed in finishing this portion of his work: a brief time compared to either of his former Periods. In striking contrast with his early exuberance and poetic self-indulgence, he will shorten the duration of his penance. For we are always to remember that Shakespeare writes only from his own deepest experience, whose present record is set down in these Tragi-comedies, being his confession and expiation through his writ. Hence they are redemptive not merely of his dramatic characters, but of himself; if he was damned to the bottom of the pit through jealousy in his *Othello*, he redeemed himself from its hell through his *Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*.

Not one of these four plays is to be found in the form of a Quarto published during the poet's lifetime; they were all first printed, as far as our present knowledge reaches, in the Folio of 1623, seven years after his death. Thus was rescued for our behoof one entire Period of Shakespeare's Life-

drama. Whence the editors, Heminge and Condell, obtained these dramas, will probably remain a secret. It should be noted, however, that the Folio, does not classify them except under the general head of Comedies, of which *The Tempest* is placed first, and *The Winter's Tale* last, while *Cymbeline* is set down in the list of Tragedies. Hence rises the question: was the poet himself aware of this significant change in his work and in himself? Of course only the plays themselves can furnish the evidence, which they do with emphasis, revealing in their action a right portion of his autobiography, even if veiled under his art's native mask.

Two other dramas are often assigned to this Third Period, *Pericles* and *Henry VIII*. But their authenticity is much questioned, and it cannot be discussed here whether they are to be in part or wholly excluded from the Shakespearian canon. Their titles, being proper names, seem not adjusted to the poet's usage in designating his Comedies. Moreover their structure, their inner movement and their general spirit appear quite different from those of the foregoing Tragi-comedies, though with the latter they have certain deep touches in common. Being such doubtful members of the poet's Life-drama, they shall have to be put aside for another occasion.

II. The next cardinal fact which we would enforce is that this Third Period is both externally and internally, on its surface and in its deepest, a Return to the First Period, especially to the latter's

third or comic Epoch. Both are essentially sanative, mediatorial, restorative after some breach, and, with a few exceptions, both turn out happy-ending. Thus we behold the poet going back and interlinking himself with his beginning, rounding out his creative Self to its completed career, and therein making it a manifestation or exemplar of what is universal in individual biography, as well as in the total Cosmos.

To be sure there is a decided difference between these two Periods in regard to the meaning and the depth of this reconciling or mediating process. The first set of Comedies show the way out of foible, folly, mistake; but these Tragi-comedies portray the remedial journey out of transgression, guilt, even out of death. Both are indeed liberations of the unfree entangled spirit; both rescue the enmeshed individual, whereby both bear the same name in Shakespeare's own terminology—Comedies.

In this connection it is to be noted that the poet goes back to the Mediterranean South for his dramatic story and setting; he returns to the Italian Renaissance for materials, and even for characters in part. Thus he again Italianizes, though with a far deeper spiritual import as well as in more sombre colors. The dark religious Teutonic side of the Renaissance seems now to have taken hold of him, in contrast with the former sunny, worldly tone of his Italianizing Comedies, which we have elsewhere evaluated. Contrast for instance the

bright Italianism of *Twelfth Night* against the austere night-shade of *The Winter's Tale* with its transfer of scene to the North. Yet both are Comedies in Shakespeare's nomenclature.

There is no doubt that during this Period the poet retires more and more to his quiet, contemplative home-life in the country at Stratford, away from the turmoil of London. Rural scenery with its sedative mood gives special tone to three of these plays; in fact the flight from civilized struggle to the simple sylvan life is in itself sanative, and becomes the grand means for the soul's restoration to harmony after its deadly discords with itself and with the outer illusive circumstance. So we may conceive Shakespeare during the present Period more and more deeply returning to the calm and the balm of Stratford out of his furious tragic experience in London. But therewith the earth-heaving upburst of the volcanic Shakespeare simmers down toward quiescence, having become reconciled and pacified with himself and with the world's order.

Thus we seek to emphasize the deeper purport of this Return which is both spatial and spiritual, revealing the poet both outwardly and inwardly, manifesting itself in his work, in his life's events, and most profoundly in the movement of his very soul. Moreover it brings to light what we may call the Biographic Norm, which underlies and really generates all individual Biography, elevating it out of an orderless succession of personal happenings

to a science stamped with the principle of universality. For at last we have to ask: What has Shakespeare's life in common with all complete lives? Every human being is a Self which he has to evolve through the years and to realize in accord with its own special endowment. Now if we can find that law of the Self and express the innermost process of its development, we have won the unit of every possible Biography, the actual Psyche of the Standard Man. Hence it comes that here so much stress is given to this Return of Shakespeare upon himself, not only as the completion of his individual life, but as his realisation and expression of all mankind's life.

III. We have just emphasized the fact that this Third Period of Shakespeare's Life-drama is a Return out of a discordant tragic condition to a time of reconcilment and restoration. Now we are to note that each of these four Tragi-comedies has such a movement both in its outer organism and in its inner soul: an estrangement and flight from the existent social order to some kind of ideal mediating world, which heals the unhappy fugitive and sends him back harmonized to his former life and its institutional environment. Thus we behold, stating the matter in abstract terms, Flight, Mediation, and Return—a completed round of ultimate individual experience. Here we may catch the present spiritual stage of the poet himself, which he creatively projects into his dramatic art-form—Tragi-comedy—which now becomes his true

self-expression, and whose thought and structure he repeats four times, with varying external accompaniments.

It is worth the more zealous worker's while to compare these four Tragi-comedies and their ideal world of mediation with four Comedies of the First Period which also has an ideal world of mediation. *Measure for Measure* with its celibate life of religion has its parallel in *Love's Labor's Lost* with its celibate life of study; the Christian cloister is the ideal refuge of the one, the heathen Academe of the other. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *As You Like It* show a flight to a primitive sylvan life as remedial of wrong, which sylvan life we find repeated, undoubtedly with important variations, in the two Tragi-comedies, *Cymbeline* and *Winter's Tale*, whose restorative is their undefiled primitive world. Finally *The Tempest* introduces the mediatorial power of supernatural beings (Ariel and his spirits) while *Midsummer Night's Dream* employs a similar ultra-human element (Puck and the Fairies). Thus we have the right to say that Shakespeare, consciously or unconsciously, goes back to his earlier form of Comedies, and re-writes them in his deeper-toned, though darker, less spontaneous vein. Moreover we are to reflect that he here reveals himself in one of his favorite art-forms; he must have felt some innate personal sympathy with this dramatic movement of the flight of the stricken soul to some form of the ideal world, which has the power of healing and restoring to

harmony the man estranged without and within.

Thus we have found the poet reaching back and taking up again one of his more youthful art-forms, and pouring into it a fresh, even if somberer content, that of his last maturest experience of life. Once more we note him returning upon his former self, and therein rounding out his total Life-drama to its final completeness. In no less than eight plays, from first to last, do we come upon this unique cycle of Flight from the corrupt reality to some kind of Ideal World which through its remedial balm brings about inner Restoration and outer Return. And a similar process he has repeatedly hinted in his Sonnets, for instance (No. 60) he meditates: "Nativity crawls to maturity" with its crown of works—let us call this his First Period, which, however, gets overcast with "crooked eclipses" which "against his glory fight", wherein we may take with him a glance at his Second or Tragic Period. And still further in the same Sonnet the process he elaborates:

Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
 And delves the parallels in beauty's brow;
 Feeds on the rarities of Nature's truth
 And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow;
 And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand—

So we may conclude that old Time with his scythe, the destructive genius of Tragedy, cannot stop the development nor kill the work of William Shakespeare, nor blast his hope of immortality. Indeed

there is a passage from one of his later Sonnets (146) which might be prefixed as the most expressive motto to this Third Period with its four Tragi-comedies, when we hear the poet make his fervid appeal to his own soul :

Then, O soul . . .
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross,
Within be fed, without be rich no more;
So shalt thou feed on Death that feeds on men,
And Death once dead there's no more dying then.

Such is this new soul of the poet, the tragi-comic we may call it, which undeaths Death, which slays that destroyer of men who was the bloody sovereign of the preceding period of Tragedy. And once more we may catch up from a Sonnet (107) a reminiscent afterglow of this reconciled time :

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured—
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
Now, with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes.

Hence the reflection will spring up that this entire Life-drama of Shakespeare, as it has been hitherto set forth in its three Periods, is one great all-comprehending Tragi-comedy whose conclusion is the redemption of the tragic individual and the recovery of the social order from its threatened tragic conflict and possible submergence. So we may designate the poet's work taken in its wholeness as redemptive, remedial, aye regenerative.

And the full fruition of the study of his career is to be gotten not from merely one of his plays though it be his greatest, not even from one of his Periods, though it contains his grandest poetry and largest characterisation, but from the entire all-embracing round of his Life-drama in its innermost psychical evolution. Such is indeed the right biography of the man when it is worthily construed.

Thus the complete work of Shakespeare reaches its supreme fulfilment as one of the Literary Bibles of mankind. This unified full-rounded Tragi-comedy of his Life-drama is a new revelation of the Divine Order, though his earlier Comedies, with which he starts, belong rather to the Mundane Order. Hence springs the religiosity which pervades these four Tragi-comedies; they are a kind of epiphany of the supernal government of the Universe and of man's portion therein. And to the student of Universal Literature we may suggest at this point the parallelism of Shakespeare's total Life-drama with Dante's threefold world-poem, which its poet also calls a Comedy, but not a Divine Comedy, which title of it is not of his coinage.

And now it is in place to make here the further reflection: all our poet's Sonnets, from which we have just cited briefly, one hundred and fifty four of them taken together, constitute in their very heart or in their ultimate quintessential process another parallel Tragi-comedy, showing likewise the Breach, the Expiation and the Return in deep correspondence with the foregoing Pan-drama of the

poet. For they form his poetic diary during a dozen years and more, mirroring very diversely in their little subjective facets all his three Periods, comic, tragic and tragi-comic. Shakespeare as Prospero, looking backwards sets down a round dozen years as the duration of his Ariel's tragic torment when his spirit was wedged fatefully "in a cloven pine":

Within which rift
Imprisoned thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years . . . thy groans
Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts
Of ever-angry bears . . . it was mine art . . .
That made gape the pine and let thee out.

So the poet in sublimely sympathetic speech metaphors his spiritual process, and even tallies the number of its years.

Undoubtedly there are in the Sonnets many diverse moods bubbling up according to the bent of the moment when the record is set down. They run the entire gamut from petty folly to loftiest wisdom, from lowest sensuality to highest spirituality, from Hell to Heaven, with a Protean transformation of idea and image. Such is the nature of this truly Shakespearian diary. Still within its copious overflow of vagaries lurks a drama, just his own drama, verily a Tragi-comedy, mirroring himself in relation to that strangely elusive woman-soul shadowed forth by him as the Dark Lady.

IV. Here we are brought to grapple with an-

other very significant change which stamps the deepest constitutive mark upon this Third Period: it is the poet's entirely new attitude toward the female character. From his destructive tragic view of the woman-soul as just set forth, he turns to make it more profoundly constructive and remedial than ever before, even than in his happiest love-work of the First Period. Let the reader stop and ponder well this startling transformation of Shakespeare's Life-drama. The woman (say Hermione) now takes her place as the central figure of the whole Tragi-comedy, becoming the ultimate mediatorial instrument of repentance, atonement and regeneration, in fine the right bearer of the poet's new reconciled world-order.

Very different, in fact just opposite was his treatment of her in his Tragedies, as we may recollect. There she was Vampire, Fury, Destroyer; sensual, faithless to love and to truth, the arch dissembler; verily the representative of the woman-soul lost, again the betrayer of Paradise to the Serpent. What a terrible procession of hag-hearted Eumenides of the feminine type sweep through the poet's Second Period! And what could have been the cause of his change and redemption from such race-hating misogyny?

But without waiting for a reply which may come later, let us now herald the good news that the poet has made another nodal transition, and his last, having evolved out of his tragic destructive time into his tragi-comic reconstructive creation, which

restores to his female folk their reconciling mediatorial character, but with new and far deeper attributes. Again this may be deemed another phase of the poet's return to his earlier work and to his primal self, yet with a vast fresh experience of life and writ, which spurs his genius once more to its basic self-expression.

For the purpose of illustrating, and enforcing these cardinal distinctions, here seems the fit place to bring before the mind of the reader some specially selected examples taken from the plays themselves. Accordingly we shall pick out three sets of typical female characters belonging to the designated Periods. And it appears to add a kind of towardly numerical harmony if we give to each of these three sets three representative Shakespearian women, thus:

(1) Portia, Rosalind, Helena—who belong to the First Period, and reveal their unique power in overcoming the obstacles to their marriage with the man they love—Comedies.

(2) Gertrude, Goneril, Cressida—who belong to the Second Period, and show themselves violators and disrupters of their institution, the Family, thus representing the negative woman-soul in the social order—Tragedies.

(3) Isabella, Imogen, Hermione—who belong to the Third Period and manifest their distinctive reconciling character by healing the broken domestic tie, by redeeming and restoring the fallen husband and the fallen institution—Tragi-comedies.

It is evident that this third set are seeking to overcome and to heal the tragic conflict and disruption produced by the second set. Thus they are in the deepest sense mediators of the estranged spirit, reconcilers, redeemers. To such a lofty position, Madonnaward, the poet now elevates the woman-soul in his latest dramas, which may be taken not only as his final literary testament to the future, but also as the ultimate supreme stage of his own life's evolution. And there can be little doubt that these three sets of female characters reveal a more personal and inly movement of the poet's self-expression than his male characters. His deepest experience always springs out of the feminine half of humanity and of himself; hence his basic theme is love in its three cardinal forms—love immediate, love estranged, and love restored—which also signalize distinctively the three Periods of his Life-drama.

Again we have to ask if this new life and writ of repentance and reconciliation had anything to do with his own direct experience. Did Shakespeare himself pass through some such purgatorial ordeal with its contrition and reparation? We know that during this Period he had more fully than ever returned to home and family at Stratford, where he lived again with wife and children, with mother, kindred, and friends (his father had already deceased in 1601). Evidently the grand separation and estrangement of his career had been repented of and atoned; the transgressor had expiated and

made good his former lapse, restoring himself to his institutional life from its start in his birth-town. Noteworthy is the fact that the wronged but forgiving and reconciling wife plays such a prominent part in these Tragi-comedies, and never before. Then too we observe now for the first time the poet's loving and detailed portraiture of the devoted young maiden, as if he had the model at his own hearth in his young daughter Judith, who in 1600 was fifteen years old.

So we repeat our view that Shakespeare in these Tragi-comedies was composing a chapter of his own biography. Moreover what he wrote was his heart's very confession given at the altar of his soul, whence he received from his own conscience his priestly absolution. Perhaps above all men who have wielded the pen he made his writ the means of his spiritual recovery, although he also won with the same pen money, fame, even immortality. If, as we hold, the Tragic Muse is ultimately his angel of rescue from the Furies of his own negative nature, and saves him through her gift of utterance from the real tragedy of his Genius, we have to think that these Tragi-comedies tell openly in his dramatic art-form the way of his restoration and redemption.

The love of woman, accordingly, has come back to him, but transfigured and endowed with a fresh restorative power, renovating his productive energy, and indeed connecting him ultimately with creation itself. The genetic instinct of his Genius

again drives him to deliver a new message to mankind from the Creator. Moreover this new message makes all his works one completed work, having finished so to speak, the colossal statue of his total Life-drama, whereby his personal self becomes an image or rather a realisation of the universally creative Self, and our human consciousness is seen to be a revelation of God-consciousness, a veritable Theophany. And we may repeat that from this view-point all individual biography shows itself as an exemplar and indeed offspring of Universal Biography.

Still there remains for us the harder, subtler, obscurer question: What brought about this life-filling change in the poet? Can we catch even remotely and perchance but fleetingly, some glimpse of its source?

V. It is evident that throughout these Tragi-comedies he has gotten rid of that insidious Dark Lady who so long cajoled him, and goaded him, through her Satanic magic of infatuation, to his tragic outlook on woman, man, and the world. To be sure we may still trace in him memories of the former awful scourge, since no experience of his ever gets lost, though it be shown not obliterated but transcended. So that burning curse, branded on his brain and seared through his heart to the very bottom, that curse whose all-annihilating up-burst we may hear worded strongest in *King Lear*, has become not only mitigated but transformed into the sweet and tender voice of forgiveness and

reconciliation. Furious London no longer submerges forbearing Stratford in its tragic maelstrom, but actually the mild rural townlet is made to placate and change into her own peace-breathing nature the struggle-torn metropolis. The Dark Lady has in some way been unqueened of her long sovereignty over the poet. Personally the greatest conquest of his life doubtless, but bringing the counterstroke that, along with his placated soul, his Genius also becomes pacified, moderated, relieved of the world-quaking paroxysms of its fight with its own tragic damnation.

Hence we must be ready to find a considerable let-down of the cosmic energy which breaks forth into such mighty utterance throughout his Tragedies, and which caps them as Time's greatest literature. Still we are not to think that this present increased placidity of self-expression is due to disease or even to exhaustion, as some critics have maintained; rather is it a sign of restoration and of a deeper health, though certainly less smiting in word-power and passion. Surely *The Tempest*, probably his last play, reveals him still the inexhausted if not the inexhaustible Shakespeare at the top of his creation; but mark its very suggestive transition from the storm and wreck of the first scene to the pervasive sunshine of the rest of the play with its penitence and forgiveness sealed by the happy-making festivities of love and marriage.

There are many signs in the Sonnets that this separation from the Dark Lady took place not

merely once, but repeatedly; numerous were the fallings-out and the makings-up, for both the man and the woman seem to have given equal provocation and then shown equal penitence for peccadillos. We hear in an early stage (No. 36) the poet's sad declaration: "Let me confess that we two must be twain", but he soon takes it back. Later (No. 87) he cries out in a deep fit of despondency: "Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing", still he keeps her a while longer, and she keeps him. But at last we may catch what appears his final resolve with its consolation (No. 119):

O benefit of ill! now I find true
 That better is by evil still made better,
 And ruined love, when it is built anew
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far
 greater.

So I return rebuked to my content,
 And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.

A scrutinizing look into the last four lines of this same Sonnet will show the poet taking a rapid glance backwards through his three Periods. That "ruined love" (evidently tragic) he is going now to rebuild so that it will be "fairer, stronger, far greater" (surely in these Tragi-comedies) than it was "at first" (namely in the early Comedies). In fact he employs the very word by which we have already expressed the present rounding out of his Life-drama; that is, he will "return" to his "content", (say, to his Happy Sexennium).

There is one of these Sonnets (No. 81) very plaintive and deep-toned, which may be taken as his final sad retrospect, when has been brought to a close his much perturbed but enormously stimulating intercourse with the Dark Lady. We are to listen to him summoning before his imagination the eternal worth of all his writings (probably both dramas and sonnets) which she has inspired him to compose. The whole Sonnet is suffused with the melancholy of a last farewell:

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;·
From hence your memory Death cannot take,
Although in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die;
The earth can yield me but a common grave,
When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie;
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read,
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live—such virture hath my pen—
Where breath most breathes—e'en in the mouths
of men.

Such seems to be the poet's backlook at his life's deepest most creative passion, when he surveys the amount and the quality of his verse which the Dark Lady has called forth from his Muse. One cannot help drawing certain inferences from the above in-

timately self-revealing lines. (1) Shakespeare expects here that his writings will be published, so that people yet unborn will read them; hence these Sonnets are not simply for his private friends, as is sometimes stated, but for the world, for all futurity. (2) He is absolutely convinced of the lasting worth of his poetry—a conviction which he has repeatedly expressed elsewhere with equal emphasis. (3) A reading public for his works, “which eyes not yet created shall o’er read”, he summons with confidence before his mind, showing that he was well aware of his chief future constituency. (4) In strong contrast, with the immortality of his writ, he stresses the evanescence of his individual life: “I, once gone, to all the world must die”. This contrast is often found in Shakespeare; something of the kind we may hear in Hamlet’s defiant words:

I do not set my life at a pin’s fee;
As for my soul, what can it do to that
Being a thing immortal as itself
(Namely the Ghost).

The poet having passed through the last stage of separation from his Dark Lady now brings his sonneted diary to an end, inasmuch as the deepest compelling source of its poetic inspiration has vanished from his experience. Accordingly in 1609, doubtless with his consent even if not with his direct co-operation, the complete book of his Sonnets is published. Probably he did not proof-read or correct or arrange in sequence his text.

VI. In recent years a new problem pertaining to the Sonnets and their author has forged to the fore: can the Dark Lady be directly pointed out, named, and to a certain extent biographed? Let the answer be at once set down and grappled with: Thomas Tyler of London University about the year 1890 published his book modestly called Shakespeare's Sonnets, which a number of enthusiastic students of the poet have heralded as the most original contribution to Shakespearian literature hitherto made by any Englishman. Whether this be so or not, must here be left out of discussion; but we shall at once state the result of Tyler's considerate and considerable search: The Dark Lady of the Sonnets is to be identified as Mistress Mary Fitton, maid of honor to Queen Elizabeth, which service she is declared to have entered about the year 1595, being then a young lady of seventeen, as her baptismal record dates her birth in 1578.

Enough opportunities she had of seeing Shakespeare, who was the already famous dramatist of London, when his theatrical company played at court, and lent their art to other festivities. But especially about 1597, when *Love's Labor's Lost* was given in its supposed new form, her picture was painted very elaborately by the poet under the character of Rosaline, who is held to represent Mary Fitton in her dark eyes and features, (hence her title of the Dark Lady) as well as in her daring behavior and witty sallies. But the main point is that Shakespeare is now declared to have found the

creative female ideal ever anew inspiring his Muse to produce that gallery of exquisitely loving and lovely women who shine all through his Happy Sexennium, whereof an account has already been given.

So the poet's heart-life bubbled up joyously and creatively for several years, portraying mainly the woman as love's protagonist winning against all obstacles the man of her choice. Doubtless there were occasional cloudlets streaking the pair's felicity, for both with good reason could hardly help jealously suspecting: so we catch from many a little turn in the Sonnets. But now falls the awfullest backstroke possible upon the poet. He heard his fate's news, for all London had caught the malicious buzzing of the scandal which is thus forthrightly recorded by one of Elizabeth's highest officials, evidently after due investigation: "Mistress Fitton is proved with child, and the Earl of Pembroke, being examined, confesseth a fact, but utterly renounceth all marriage." Such was the violent shock at Court, felt most distinctly in what the reporter tells further: "I fear they both will dwell in the Tower a while, for the Queen hath vowed to send them thither." Redder must have blazed Elizabeth's red hair at this defiance of her courtly etiquette as well as of her personal vanity. More shreds of that scandal have floated down into the present, but the prying reader can find them in other books, to his and our better satisfaction.

Now if this quake tumbled up the Court to such

turmoil, what an outbursting volcano must it have caused to shoot forth from the breast and mouth of William Shakespeare, her lover and her poet with a worldful of emotion in his heart and of imagination in his brain! His was the greatest soul of all the land harboring the mightiest self-expression; what new word, especially about the female character, will he now have to say? This torturing infernal experience must also have its right record; still he is totally unable to expel from his bosom that love of the woman of whose utter falsity he has become well aware. Out of such a lacerated heart we may hear him sigh a Sonnet (No. 95) to his Dark Lady or perchance Mary Fitton:

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins inclose!
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
Making lascivious comment on thy sport,
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise;
Naming thy name blesses an ill report.

Such is her malignant witchery over her broken-hearted lover, and well does she know her sovereignty, sporting with him as the cat with the caught mouse, who cannot escape, at least not yet. Still the poet will find his relief, yea his revenge, we may call it, through that all-rescuing gift of his, namely self-expression in poetry. He will cast out of his seething bosom into the off-bearing word

his heart's trituration, his tragic emotion, even Death itself.

Here we are to note this telling synchronism: the foregoing deed of Mary Fitton in connection with the Earl of Pembroke took place in 1600-1, which coincides to the very year with the start of Shakespeare's Tragic Period, as before set forth. His *Hamlet* must have been soon if not already on the way, introducing those two fatefully blasted women, the mother (Gertrude) and the lady-love (Ophelia), early representatives of that new sort of Shakespearian femininity whose dark destiny sings with many a throeful reverberation through all his Tragedies for some nine years. So with this transitional deed and time he turns his life's most significant yet terrific node, from happy Portia and Rosalind to hapless Cressida and Goneril, from the woman-soul loveable and loved to the woman-soul faithless and fated, loveless and lost.

Such was the central deepest transition of the poet both in his life and in his art, both really and ideally. He passes from joy-radiating Comedy to woe-thrilling Tragedy, still through the experience of love, which both saves and slays, and which thus reveals its twofold opposite nature both as preserver and destroyer of man. A ruin he now regards his love of woman, indeed he calls it his "ruined love", which, however, his undying aspiration still hopes "to rebuild". And this brings us to the second supreme soul-renewing transformation in the poet's Life-drama: Why and how could

he pass out of this mortal tragic cataclysm to his immortal redemptive creativity?

VII. Confession, repentance, atonement we have found to be the deepest and most enduring notes struck in these four Tragi-comedies, being emphasized as the turning-point to recovery and regeneration on the part of the guilty soul, the otherwise tragic transgressor. Undoubtedly Shakespeare has often used the penitential process before this time, even in his early plays, but never to the same extent, nor with the same soul-stricken and compelling power of conviction. And especially has he turned the Sonnets into a kind of confessional, through which fervently throb the throes of repentance. So much we have already enforced with some repetition.

But now comes the perhaps surprising fact that the Dark Lady also has her spells of deep contrition and remorse for her manifold sins, all of which or at least many of which are right fully and frankly reported by her heart-shent but ever-forgiving lover still idealizing her in his Sonnets. At the conclusion of one of these (No. 34) he seems talking to her as if face to face:

Though thou repent, yet have I still the loss;
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offense's cross.

Here we see the sorrowful Shakespeare hearken to the repentant Dark Lady's "strong offense", which she confesses, and we also catch his woe-laden an-

swer. Even her woman's tears are not wanting, which, however, soften still more his heart to forgiveness:

Ah, but those tears are pearl, which thy love
sheds

And they are rich and ransom all ill deeds.

We cannot help asking our discerning reader at this point whether Shakespeare could employ such tender condoning words to a man, as is commonly supposed, be he called Southampton, Pembroke, Hughes, or any other male-named malefactor dug up by the vast horde of commentators?

Not a few are the similar deepfelt turns possible only to the man and woman in the ultimate intimacies of a mutual love-life, which we may sense in the Sonnets, for just such a record is their chiefest human worth in themselves as well as in the poet's biography. Another little echo of the same sort we may hear in the next Sonnet (No. 35)

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.

So the poet seeks to allay the fair culprit's penitential sorrows for her trespasses, which she seems to be telling him as her real confessor, from whom she knows she will receive easy absolution. It is possible that the famous lines (No. 107) already cited

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured . . .
And peace proclaims olives of endless age

pertains to both Shakespeare as well as his Dark Lady, and celebrate their final peaceful recovery after their long happy and hapless discipline of love.

Again the question rises: Can the Dark Lady in her present mood be identified with aforesaid Mary Fittton? Has the latter too reached the stage of final repentance and resolved to quit her gay life in London, returning to her country home, as Shakespeare returns fully to his Stratford about the same time? She is drawing dangerously near to thirty years old; time and fast living have begun to stamp their tell-tale creases and their jaundiced colors upon her looks, which she tries to paint away, to the poet's disgust, as we may infer from some of the Sonnets. She has certainly had her youth's frolic, and sown a very prolific crop of wild oats, having given birth, among her various other fertilities, to three infants all born outside of wedlock, but none of them ascribed to Shakespeare. Mr. Tyler, our special reporter on these delicate matters, informs us that about 1607-8, she definitely marries a Mr. Polwhele, though she is doubtfully credited with two other husbands at different times in her career, but not one of them named William Shakespeare. With this last husband, however, she retires from London to her native rural Gaws-worth where she long lives fameless, yet repentant

and reconciled, we hope, surviving many years her world-renowned poetizer, whom, in addition to his other greatnesses, she has made the most enduring and colossal lover that ever poured out his heart into human speech.

And now this loftiest culmination of his love-life is what he is going to celebrate in his native art-form, producing what some sympathetic critics have deemed his grandest drama, *Antony and Cleopatra*. There is little doubt that he has brooded over this theme many a season, at least ever since he, absorbing old Plutarch for material, wrote his *Julius Caesar*, at the beginning of his Tragic Period. For then he had already come to feel the irresistible but mortal fascination of his own dark Cleopatra, whose world-overmastering Antony he might well conceive himself to be in his poetically heroic deed. Let the synchronism again be marked that the completion of this drama is dated 1607-8, the time when Mary Fitton, through her marriage and retirement is supposed to have passed forever outside of Shakespeare's personal horizon.

Readers of the poet have often detected the Dark Lady of the Sonnets acting herself out in word and deed under the mask of the Queen of Egypt, who is also "black with Phoebus' amorous kisses". But what we would now enforce is that Cleopatra in her last utterances shows herself a repentant woman, whose sighful voice we may hear in

My desolation does begin to make
A better life (Act. V. Sc. 2).

So she breathes her change in deep self-communion.
And in the same scene she openly confesses to
Caesar

I do confess I have
Been laden with like frailties which before
Have often shamed our sex.

Nor should we omit another touch which seems to
recall Mary Fitton the mother, even if her chil-
dren, like Cleopatra's came of irregular love:

Peace, peace,
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
That sucks the nurse asleep.

It is her motherhood, then, which solaces the dying
thought of Cleopatra, even when she puts the
deadly asp to her bosom, breathing out her life
in her last reconciled words as they gasp off slowly
into eternal silence:

As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle—

Thus Shakespeare seizes from antiquity and cele-
brates what may be deemed the sovereign love-pair
of Universal History, which has hardly furnished
another like them in the course of the intervening
centuries down till to-day. For here the love of
man and woman towers far above a small com-
munity's embroilment (like that of *Romeo and
Juliet*), mounting up to a world-historical event on
which future ages may be said to hinge for a time.
In such a colossal framework the poet has dared to

enshrine his passion for the Dark Lady, where it still may be felt in all its burning intensity as well as in its Titanic grandiosity. It is another instance among many that Shakespeare appreciated the lasting greatness of himself and of his work, even outstripping Roman Antony in significance for human History.

So, if we may trust the double record, set down both in the Sonnets and in the Dramas, we have finally to behold Shakespeare and the Dark Lady, the man and woman, perchance another Adam and Eve, as two penitents atoning for their past lives with an internal and also external act of contrition and expiation, both of them fleeing from their Babylon to an innocent idyllic, yet institutional life in the country. What a far-echoing report of themselves they have left behind, reverberant through space and down time, having together created the very masterpiece of the World's Literature, called Shakespeare's Tragedies!

VIII. My reader, I hope, still feels prompted to propound along with myself one question more: Was it this Dark Lady (call her Mary Fitton if you wish) who started in Shakespeare's soul-life the foregoing penitential turn which we feel in every one of his Tragi-comedies? Did her final transformation, or conversion it may be called, take hold of the poet too, over whom she held such magic sway of imparting herself good and bad, joyful and joyless, comic and tragic? Is she really the underlying influence which propels him into this

Third Period of his total Life-drama, performing essentially the same function she performs apparently in the two previous Periods? No documented statement to that effect, no direct proof is to be found, still some hintful pointers scattered through several Sonnets we may stop and look at, seeking to feel if not to decipher their somewhat veiled suggestion.

Already we have noticed the poet's absolute recognition of the Dark Lady as the source of his inspiration: for instance (No. 38)

How can my Muse want subject to invent
 While thou dost breathe that pour'st into my
 verse
 Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
 O give thyself the thanks if aught in me
 Worthy perusal stand against thy sight,
 For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee
 When thou thyself dost give invention light.
 Be thou the tenth Muse—ten times more in worth
 Than those old nine. . . .

I am aware that the vast majority of commentators maintain that the above lines were addressed to some man. But there is nothing in the Sonnet from which any inference of the sort can be drawn. Impossible! Such a view taints their poetic flavor and kills their meaning for the poet's life. And in the next Sonnet (No. 39) he stresses with an exclamation the source of his song:

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing
When thou art all the better part of me!

In fact he more than intimates that sometimes the sight of her is too powerful, the inspiration of her presence too overwhelming so that it paralyzes his pen (No. 103):

O blame me not, if I no more can write!
Look in your glass, and there appears a face
That overgoes my blunt invention quite
Dulling my lines and doing me disgrace.

And thus we find confessed in many a Sonnet the poet's utter infatuation with the Dark Lady. Let her be as devilish as she may, he cannot break loose from her charm as she clutches him fast by his very heart strings, revelling in her mastery, yea in her tyranny over him, and finding her demonic joy, as he more than once complains, in the love-tortures of her writhing yet helpless victim.

But there is another side. That Dark Lady was herself a genius in her way; she had her transcendent gift, the gift for exciting inspiration, since, if we may credit the confessor himself, she possessed the genius to inspire the loftiest flights of the widest-winged poetic imagination that the world has yet seen. She was not beautiful; indeed her own raptured idealizer stresses not only her homeliness but her faithlessness. Still hers was the ever-welling fountain of which Shakespeare needed to drink in order to rouse his creative

energy to its uttermost excellence. Then another peculiar quality of hers we catch up from these Sonnets: her marvelous power of metamorphosis, spiritual and physical. She could be the lovely, lordly, faithful Portia, and then she became a female Mephistopheles who made her lover Shakespeare's heart and mind tragic, and therewith human nature itself.

But now we return to the last metamorphosis of the Dark Lady, her repentance and soulful recovery, conjectural indeed, but certainly possible, yea, quite likely in her spirit's evolution, as we may note in the case of thousands of reformed transgressors. Did she then lead the love-leashed poet along with herself into her present final transformation? Was she again the pivot of this fresh turn of his spirit's renewal through the love of woman, which we have seen to be the ultimate motive power of his creativity throughout his entire career?

In a number of Sonnets we find hints of some profound and lasting separation which tears the heart of the poet and drives him to a deep-toned melancholy of retrospection. Some such note is struck in No. 36:

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves are one;
So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help, by me be borne alone.

Evidently the time has come for a permanent and complete severance of the most intimate ties of the

soul; henceforth they must live asunder, though their loves cannot be parted by any resolved, outer separation:

In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite.

Thus the poet must now go on alone, "without thy help"—another indication of her place in his spirit's activity. A further yet quite opposite stage in the parting of the two lovers seems suggested in No. 39:

Even for this (my song) let us divided live,
And our dear love lose name of single one,
That by this separation I may give
That due to thee which thou deserv'st alone.

Here seems to be couched some hint of the new sort of poetry or drama which he is writing, and which she, the newly transformed Dark Lady, still inspires, being "that due to thee" from me "which thou deserv'st alone". If this be the case, then the poet himself declares her the source of his last inspiration to write. So we dare construe these two Sonnets quite against all authority. Though we would avoid verbal interpretation, we may state that one misunderstood word (*him*) in the last line of this Sonnet (No. 39) has been a stumbling block: "By praising *him* here who doth hence remain." *Him* means in this connection not some individual (Southampton, Pembroke, etc.), but, as

the context shows, is general in its allusion signifying *anyone*, or *whomever*.

And now comes a Sonnet composed in a still different stage or mood of this last Period. It shows the poet criticising himself, intimating his falling-off in style and power from his previous excellence (No. 76):

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
 So far from variation or quick change?
 Why with the time do I not glance aside,
 To new-found methods and to compounds
 strange?
 Why write I still all one, ever the same,
 And keep invention in a noted weed
 That every word doth almost tell my name,
 Showing their birth and where they did proceed?
 O know, sweet love, I always write of you,
 And you and love are still my argument—
 So all my best is dressing old words new,
 Spending again what is already spent,
 For as the sun is daily new and old
 So is my love still telling what is told.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the poet is here looking back at his work and giving his view of its present style and of himself. The central point which he emphasizes is that he reproduces his old art-form, Comedy, keeping his "invention in a noted weed". This means, as we construe it, that he has returned to his former comic "method"

(his First Period) in these recent Tragi-comedies. Moreover he declares his theme to be eternally the same: "sweet love, I always write of you", whereupon follows that very suggestive acknowledgment: "you and love are still my argument". That is, single-love he transmutes and idealizes now through his poetry to all-love; his individual passion is chastened and purified to universal love (say in *Hermione*). Hence "let our dear love lose name of single one" in this new transfiguration. Undoubtedly he repeats himself; so does the Sun, being "daily new and old".

Thus Shakespeare indicates his return to his earlier plays, reconciled and happy-ending, out of his tragic time. This Sonnet was doubtless one of the poet's last, written possibly in 1609, not long before the publication of his book of Sonnets. It shows that he was already writing in his new mood, as he here sets down in his diary the pivotal experience which starts and animates his whole Third Period.

A reflection derived from World-Literature cannot help intruding itself into the foregoing conclusion. Dante has in like manner made the woman whom he loves his deliverer, his mediator, his spirit's prompter and guide through Hell to Heaven. But Beatrice was innocent; so we turn to Goethe's Margaret, the fallen and the risen soul through love, who thereby helps redeem her lover, Faust, and of whom the Chorus chants the final loftiest note of the poem:

Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.

Which has been translated: "The Woman-Soul
(or the Ever-Womanly) draweth us onward and
upward."

On April 23, 1616, Shakespeare passed away in his mansion of New Place, being just fifty-two years old, his death-day falling upon his birth-day. He was buried in the Stratford Church, and he must have taken good care to possess the most conspicuous tomb in the town. Lasting if not everlasting he wished his final resting-place to endure, for some such motive breathes out of the inscription on his grave, probably the last poetry our poet ever wrote:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here;
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones.

Did he have some presentiment that his sepulchre would be eternal, and that he, "the heir of all eternity", should seek to make his tomb eternal, a kind of Mecca for the whole English-speaking world? Certainly he was not indifferent to the future estate of his achievement and of his reputation. If the foregoing lines closed his poetical career, we shall cite a very early passage on the same theme

which he may have intoned as a sort of prelude to his Life-drama (in *Love's Labor's Lost*):

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live registered upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death,
When spite of cormorant devouring Time,
The endeavor of this present breath may buy
That honor which shall bate his scythe's keen
edge
And make us heirs of all eternity.

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